


MUSIC TO WATCH
CAMPAIGN ADS BY
ERIC FELTEN

the weekly

Standard

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Hanging Out with John McAfee

The
Libertarians'
Trump

BY MATT
LABASH



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Some Sympathy for the Emperor

People are living longer than they used to, as any reader of the obituary page can attest. But pushing the threshold of old age ever higher, or surviving to some unprecedented milestone, has problems of its own—as people at the top of the pyramid can attest.

THE SCRAPBOOK was pleased to note when Britain's Queen Elizabeth II passed her ancestor Victoria's tenure on the throne and reached the age of 90. But even Her Indefatigable Majesty faces reality: There may well come a time when the queen will be unable to carry out her duties in a country where there is hardly a tradition of abdication. No doubt the unwritten British constitution will find a way around the problem. In the distant past, others served as regents when children inherited the throne—or, in the early 19th century, when George III's illness incapacitated him.

Of course, in those European states where crowned heads still reign—Norway, Spain, the Netherlands, Denmark, etc.—tenure on the throne tends to be treated like the chairmanship of a board: In the past couple of years, the kings and queens

of Spain, the Netherlands, and Belgium have stepped down to make way for younger successors, and even Pope Benedict XVI felt obliged, in 2013, to take the unprecedented step (in modern times) of stepping aside.



Emperor Akihito: How about I pass the baton?

Now comes the 82-year-old Emperor Akihito of Japan, who, last week, delivered a 10-minute video message—only the second such occasion in his 27-year reign—which amounted to a plea to be allowed to retire. There is no inside story or unmentioned detail here: The emperor is an intelligent, popular, and deeply conscientious monarch; but in the past decade, he has undergone cardiac surgery and

been treated for prostate cancer. And what the Japanese throne lacks in political power is more than compensated by heavy, and unrelenting, public duties. By any measure, Akihito has earned the right to shift the burden to his son, the 56-year-old Crown Prince Naruhito.

The problem is that Japan's constitution, written during General Douglas MacArthur's postwar Allied occupation, has no provision for an emperor's abdication. And while public sentiment is on Akihito's side, concern is being expressed, from varying perspectives, that one effort to amend the law will open the door to others: to allow women to inherit the throne, for example, or to change the emperor's status from "symbol of state" to "head of state."

Which, given the customary pace of change in Japan, may prolong the process beyond Akihito's reign—and that's too bad. The country is at a crossroads in its modern history: America seems to be retreating from Asia, China is growing increasingly aggressive, and Japan's sclerotic political system may not even be prepared to grant an elderly man his well-earned rest. ♦

No Sympathy for the Media

When it comes to irresponsible rhetoric, the media have long adhered to an unbelievable political double standard. We didn't think it was possible, but Donald Trump has managed to heighten the contradiction with his ill-considered comment last week about "Second Amendment people." To review, while riffing to the crowd in his characteristic fashion, Trump

said the following: "Hillary wants to abolish, essentially abolish, the Second Amendment. By the way . . . if she gets to pick her judges, nothing you can do, folks. Although the Second Amendment people, maybe there is, I don't know." There's more than one way to interpret the comment, and none of the interpretations is flattering to the candidate. At the less-malignant end of the spectrum you could say it's just another instance of carelessly worded, crowd-pleasing stand-

up. But the media almost universally settled on the most-malign reading: Trump was calling for Hillary Clinton's assassination.

We can understand not giving a provocative blowhard the benefit of the doubt, but the *Washington Post* went so far as to publish an op-ed condemning Trump, "Political violence is no joke." As of this writing, it is the second-most-read item on the *Post's* website. And the notable thing about the piece is the authorship. The *Post*

NEWS.COM

identifies the writers up top: “William Kennedy Smith and Jean Kennedy Smith are the nephew and sister of President John. F. Kennedy and Sen. Robert F. Kennedy, who was assassinated on June 6, 1968.”

Certainly the Kennedy family has been uniquely afflicted by political violence. But the description of the authors here is woefully incomplete. Aside from his famously assassinated relatives, William Kennedy Smith is best known for having been the subject of a very public rape trial. While Smith was acquitted, three other women went public with accusations that he had also raped them, but their testimony was not admitted.

Notably, Smith was partying the night he was accused of rape with his Uncle Ted Kennedy, most notorious for having abandoned Mary Jo Kopechne, still alive, in a car he had driven off a bridge, while it sank and she drowned. Ted Kennedy didn’t go back to help her and nonetheless went on to be venerated as the “lion of the Senate.” After he died in 2009, former *Newsweek* and *New York Times* editor Ed Klein said on the *Diane Rehm Show*, “I don’t know if you know this or not, but one of [Ted Kennedy’s] favorite topics of humor was indeed Chappaquiddick itself. And he would ask people, ‘Have you heard any new jokes about Chappaquiddick?’” (Yes, Klein’s credibility has taken some hits in the years since, but it’s also undeniably true that he had a cozy relationship with Ted Kennedy.) Suffice to say, it is pretty nauseating to see the *Post* give a prominent platform to a man whom many suspect of committing actual acts of violence, from which to tut-tut about the rhetoric of others.

THE SCRAPBOOK has long been concerned about the rise of Trump and what he represents. If the media were genuinely distraught about him, as opposed to glorying in the unhoped-for gift to their favored candidate that his candidacy represents, they might do a bit of overdue soul-searching. Long before Trump ever arrived on the political scene, they destroyed their credibility by

proffering and sanctioning unfair condemnations of rhetoric from the right while excusing irresponsible comments, not to mention actual violence, from the left. Sometimes a bit of moral authority can be useful; but they have none left. ♦

For Your Viewing Pleasure

The boss has added some great new attractions at conversations-withbillkristol.org (hosted by the Foundation for Constitutional Government). There’s a new conversation with Spencer Abraham (former U.S.

senator from Michigan, secretary of energy) and our very own Jay Cost on the state of the 2016 race. The later part of the discussion, on some of the implications for both parties in the event of either a Trump or Clinton victory, is particularly strong. (But of course, you’ll want to watch the whole thing.)

And there is also a newly released conversation with Harvey Mansfield—the latest in a very compelling series. THE SCRAPBOOK has heard enthusiastic reviews from those who’ve already had a chance to watch it. This conversation focuses on what Mansfield calls “America’s Constitutional Soul.” The conversation was recorded shortly after the death of



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2016 CAMPAIGN BUTTONS

Justice Antonin Scalia, and Mansfield reflects on Scalia's constitutionalism and ours, as well as on why America can be said to have a "constitutional soul," on how our political parties treat the Constitution, and on the relationship of the Constitution to the Declaration of Independence. ♦

For Your Reading Pleasure

In case you haven't already noticed the double-date at the bottom of the page, just a heads-up that this is a combined issue of THE WEEKLY STANDARD. We'll be off next week to take the waters. But many of our colleagues will be hard at work as usual. We're referring in part to our indefatigable team at weeklystandard.com, who will be publishing their customary sparkling online stories 24/7, even as we old-school types recharge our batteries.

We realize, though, that no SCRAP-BOOK next week may leave a void too

large even for our online team to entirely fill. So besides the conversations recommended above, let us also commend to you the extensive library of podcasts (www.weeklystandard.com/podcasts) hosted by our colleagues Michael Graham and Eric Felten, as well as the weekly newsletters from Bill Kristol and Jonathan V. Last. You can sign up for them at newsletters.weeklystandard.com. See you again week after next. ♦

Help Wanted

THE WEEKLY STANDARD is hiring an assistant literary editor. This is a full-time clerical/administrative post with editorial and production duties and the opportunity to assist in the composition of the Books & Arts section. The ideal applicant will be interested in promotion and social media. Knowledge of Adobe InDesign is desirable but not mandatory. Send résumé and cover letter to: hr@weeklystandard.com. ♦

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In Praise of Park Rangers

It was delightful, as odysseys go, and I wouldn't mind doing it again . . . and again.

The six national parks that I visited and wrote up for this magazine (hard job but someone has to do it) were all magnificent in their own unique ways. Two—the Grand Canyon and Crater Lake—were about holes in the ground. One—Death Valley—was about millions of acres of desert that seemed, on first look, to be essentially and primordially barren, but turned out to be alive and enchanting. The remaining three—Glacier, Rocky Mountain, and Zion—were about high country, each unique.

But all of these parks had this in common: the excellence, professionalism, and good nature of the rangers who staffed them.

This didn't occur to me until later in my tour, but when it did, I thought back and recalled how I had been guided and helped by people eager to assist and explain. You wonder why the airlines, for instance, can't find people like that. But you don't dwell on it very long.

More pleasant, by far, to recall the ranger at Death Valley who spent 30 minutes over the map, carefully highlighting the things he thought I ought to see. I took the map and followed his instructions—to a little canyon that looked like nothing much from the road but opened up into a place of marvelous light and shadow once I had walked a mile or two. By the time I'd turned around, I was grateful for his reminder to pack water. Everyone knows that it gets hot in the desert. But you are inclined to forget just how hot.

Later in the trip, I drove by a sign pointing the way to some forlorn and forgotten mine. I thought it might be

worth hiking back in with the camera, later in the day, for some mood shots and mentioned that to another ranger at a different station. He shook his head.

"Too hard a walk?" I said.

"More like . . . dangerous."

"What? Snakes?"

"We've had some reports of, uh, illegal activity up there."

"Oh."



"I hate that," he said in a distinctly proprietary tone.

"I can imagine," I said.

The very idea. In his park.

That note of pride was common to all of the rangers I talked to. Which ever park they were working, you got the sense that they felt it was the earth's most splendid piece of topography since Eden, and they were fortunate to be its custodians.

A ranger at Crater Lake spent a full hour giving me the account of how the great hole in the earth came into being. There was a film, playing in a little theater just a few steps away from where we stood, and it would have told me everything I needed to know about this subject. But the ranger plainly enjoyed telling the story as long as he had an audience.

On my way out of the visitors' center, I asked another ranger to help me identify a couple of the majestic conifers on the ridge above the parking lot. He gave me the full tutorial, and I left feeling like I could have passed an exam at the undergraduate level on old-growth forests in Oregon.

It was like this at every park. So it came as no surprise at all, a while later, when I read that in terms of citizen satisfaction, the Department of the Interior leads all government agencies. The 300 million people who visit the various parks every year obviously experience the same sort of enthusiasm and competence that I had encountered.

In this survey, by the way, Interior was given a grade of 75. Not too far off the highest private sector number of 79, which went to the manufacturing/durable goods sector, and especially impressive when you consider that, as the report notes, "both federal and local government services score far below every private economic sector in user satisfaction."

One might be inclined to shrug all this away, thinking, "Well, how hard can it be? You work in beautiful surroundings, and everyone you talk to is there by choice. Not like you are an agent of the IRS."

True enough, I suppose. But, then, this is the government we are talking about. Nothing in the regulations required the ranger at Glacier to take the time to guide me to a trail that didn't look like much on the map but was, she said, "one of the most beautiful spots on earth."

I found the trail, and it led to a meadow that was, in fact, pretty special and that I never would have seen if she had been content to do things according to that old mantra, "Good enough for government work."

Geoffrey Norman

Three Baby Boom Presidents Would Have Been Enough

Conservatives, temperamentally respectful of the past, uncertain about the present, and doubtful of the future, are often inclined to embrace the notion that their age is one of decadence. We at THE WEEKLY STANDARD have tended to resist this temptation. While we might admire works like Jacques Barzun's *From Dawn to Decadence*, while we might enjoy an occasional dip into the more apocalyptic waters of Oswald Spengler's *Decline of the West*, while we might quote a few lines from the great and mordant Philip Larkin, we're perhaps too American to turn our backs on the future.

But even we would have to acknowledge that this election season has challenged our usual optimism. Presidents matter, and it's no small thing that the two major-party candidates present the American people with the worst choice since their forefathers had to choose between James Buchanan and John C. Frémont 160 years ago (and this may be unfair to Frémont). If Hillary Clinton vs. Donald Trump is progress, we could do with less of it.

But this past week brought glimmers of hope, flashes of reassurance, that perhaps we are not living in *fin de siècle* America. Perhaps we're merely living through the twilight of the baby boomers. And it's perhaps fitting that the final boomer president will be either a narcissistic draft dodger, like the first, or a votary of identity politics and the nanny state, like the third. Three baby boomer presidents would have been enough. But we're likely to be saddled with a fourth before we can move on.

And move on we eventually will. Indeed, two Americans who made news this week suggest that we might be moving on up rather than continuing to slide down after 2020. One is Evan McMullin, the 40-year-old former CIA operative who stepped forward to offer voters a better choice for president in as many states as it will still be possible to get on the ballot or arrange for a write-in campaign—which will probably turn out to be the great majority of the states. McMullin is an impressive young

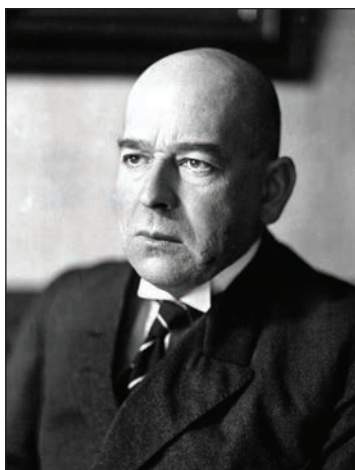
man who has served his country well and cares about its future. What's more, he's shown himself willing to brave ridicule from those sitting on the sidelines—a ridicule that is, dare one say, characteristic of an age of decadence. This condescension of the onlookers, proud of their cleverness, stands in striking contrast to the courage and

public-spiritedness of McMullin. As for those conservatives who can't get beyond the fact that McMullin has slim odds of success, we remind them of the words of the philosopher Leo Strauss: "A conservative, I take it, is a man who despises vulgarity; but the argument which is concerned exclusively with calculations of success, and is based on blindness to the nobility of the effort, is vulgar."

The day after McMullin announced his candidacy, primary elections were held in Wisconsin. All the attention went to the overwhelming victory of Paul Ryan over his Trumpian opponent, itself a sign that Trumpism may not reach that far beyond the man him-

self. But over in northeast Wisconsin, 31-year-old Mike Gallagher, who served seven years on active duty as a human intelligence and counterintelligence officer in the U.S. Marine Corps, and who campaigned on traditional conservative themes, won an easy primary victory over a longtime state legislator.

Gallagher has emphasized rebuilding America's defenses, perhaps not surprising for someone completing a Ph.D. in national security studies from Georgetown University and with real-world experience fighting America's enemies. And like Ryan, and unlike Trump, Gallagher has embraced "patient-centered, free-market reforms" in health care and overhauling federal spending. A local talk radio host assessing the race wrote that Gallagher's opponent "seemed to pattern his campaign [after] Donald Trump's" and concluded that voters' rejection of his "Trumpian tactics" was a "major factor" in Gallagher's win. If not dragged down too much in November by the top of the ticket, Gallagher should become a member of Congress, a body that will very



Oswald Spengler, vindicated?

much benefit from his intelligent and principled presence.

So perhaps our prospect need not be one of decline and decadence. Perhaps the likes of McMullin and Gallagher—the 9/11 Generation, as we’ve called them before—are the future. Perhaps the baby boomers have simply saved the worst for last, and Trump and Clinton are merely the final gasp of a decadent interlude. Let us hope so. The rise of a new generation can’t come too soon.

—William Kristol

Ignoring Entitlements



What, me worry?

As Trump speeches go, his address to the Detroit Economic Club was a good one. Donald Trump cleared the low bar of actually staying focused on what is mostly a pro-growth economic policy. But for a speech on economics, it was also remarkable for what it didn’t say. There was absolutely nothing about America’s most pressing fiscal issue: runaway spending on Medicare and Social Security. And even if Trump had mentioned the issue of entitlements in his economic speech, chances are he would have—as he has elsewhere on the campaign trail—ruled out changes to the programs.

Anyone who would cut federal spending has to face the daunting fact that more than two-thirds of the federal budget is spent automatically on Medicare, Social Security, and other entitlement programs, such as Medicaid and unemployment insurance. Some 17 percent of the budget goes to defense, while interest on the federal debt eats up another 6.5 percent. The little that is left for discretionary spending—the 6.5 percent of the budget

Congress uses to pay for disaster relief, research, education, and less salutary items such as pork—could easily be crowded out. Economist Milton Ezrati warned in *City Journal* last year that, in the likely event the interest-rate on federal debt doubles, interest payments would eat up all non-defense discretionary spending. Even the liberal think tank the Urban Institute says that, absent reforms, mandatory spending on entitlements will swallow 98.3 percent of the budget a decade from now, leaving just 1.7 percent for all discretionary spending—and that 1.7 percent *includes* defense.

Trump succeeded in capturing the nomination in no small part because he took on immigration as an existential issue for America. But entitlement reform is just as pressing, if not more so. In 2008, there were 3.2 people in the workforce paying into entitlement programs for every retiree collecting benefits. That figure will drop to 2.2 in the next couple of decades, even with America’s population swelling as a result of largely unchecked immigration. Unless these programs are restructured drastically, there’s no amount of Trumpian economic growth that will be able to preserve them.

Entitlement reform was a centerpiece of the Republican ticket four years ago. Does that mean it’s a losing issue? Before he got the vice presidential nomination, Paul Ryan had been the biggest leader on entitlement reform in Congress. Many expected his association with the issue would prove damaging. Yet, near the end of a punishing and dishonest campaign, in which Republicans were slandered as the party that would pull the plug on grandma, polls showed Romney-Ryan essentially tied with Obama on whom voters trusted more to preserve Medicare.

Four years later we know this much for sure: The Democrats are glib and unserious about saving the social safety net. Social Security’s long-term funding shortfall has grown from \$5.3 trillion to \$10.7 trillion on Obama’s watch. Obamacare siphoned \$716 billion from Medicare, and Medicare premiums are poised (again) to rise precipitously. And now, facing a funding debacle, Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton wants to increase Social Security benefits and expand government-funded health care.

A serious Republican candidate could gain credibility—and votes—by pointing out that Democratic entitlement plans are complete jabberwocky. Alas, Donald Trump also resides in a budgetary Wonderland. And what for? Trump appears to have gained nothing by making false promises to voters about entitlements. He’s on a path to lose by a much larger margin than Romney and Ryan and against a far less popular Democrat. Speaker Ryan may have reluctantly endorsed Trump, but perhaps he should speak up before Trump completely undercuts the years’ worth of work he and other Republicans have done educating the public about the need for entitlement reform.

—Mark Hemingway

The Soundtrack of the Silly Season

Where does that music in attack ads come from?

BY ERIC FELTEN

Now that campaigns are in full swing—from races for local sheriff to the long presidential slog—we won't be able to escape the silly season soundtrack, the music that underpins TV and radio attack ads and feel-good spots alike. You've heard it all before: the gloomy, grim, and portentous sounds meant to produce anxiety and evoke the dire catastrophe that the other candidate is threatening; and the soaring, surging anthems meant to produce positive vibes and the hopeful feeling that one's own candidate will make everything all right. But where does all that music come from?

There's a whole industry providing prefabricated incidental music for use in television shows, commercials, documentaries, and even low- and medium-budget feature films. We hear such music all the time, even when we're not aware of it. Take one of the most climactic scenes in recent television history—the moment in *Breaking Bad* when gangster Gus Fring walks out of a nursing home room that has just blown up. Completing the strangeness of the scene, as Fring stands for a moment in the hall, we hear some chipper elevator music. That ditty had to come from somewhere. The producers of the show didn't hire a composer to make it from scratch;

Eric Felten is managing editor of THE WEEKLY STANDARD and host of The Weekly Standard "Confab" podcast (www.weeklystandard.com/section/confab). See the online version of this article for links to some of the music: www.weeklystandard.com/article/2003783.

instead they turned to FirstCom—one of the major players, along with De Wolfe Music and Omnimusic, in “library music”—for an off-the-shelf track, in this case a cut described as “Classic Department Store Background Styling.”



As elections approach, production-music houses such as FirstCom do boffo box-office providing the music that underscores political ads. With music in a minor key for one's opponent and a major key for one's own client, production music has made it possible for political advertisers to manipulate viewers' emotions with the same tools used in filmmaking. It's a practice that has transformed the role of music in politics.

Campaign songs are nearly as old as the republic. In 1800 the Federalists sang "Adams and Liberty," and the Democratic-Republicans extolled Thomas Jefferson in the song "The Son of Liberty." But it was in 1840 that campaign music became key to

victory. Not only was “Tippecanoe and Tyler Too” “sung, hummed, and bel-
lowed on all sides,” as George Temple-
ton Strong put it, the Whigs published
an entire secular hymnal of music
celebrating William Henry Harrison,
The Log Cabin Song Book. The Dem-
ocrats whined that the Whigs had, in
their emphasis on tunes, abandoned
“REASON AND TRUTH” and were
instead appealing through song to—
gasp!—“brute passions alone.” The
singing of songs, they complained, had
taken “the place of the calm appeal to
the good judgement.” General Harri-
son was said to have been “sung into
the Presidency.”

Over the decades, coming up with ditties extolling the virtues of one's candidate largely gave way to adopting the popular songs of the day. Franklin Delano Roosevelt made "Happy Days Are Here Again" his theme, as Truman did "I'm Just Wild about Harry." John F. Kennedy had "High Hopes" (though in a sort of throwback, his campaign also deployed a bespoke jingle with the don't-leave-'em-guessing lyrics "Kennedy, Kennedy, Kennedy, Kennedy, Kennedy, Kennedy, Kennedy, Kennedy for me!").

This year Hillary has made 2015's "Fight Song" her theme; Donald Trump has gone for a boomer mixtape of rock hits. The modern rally-song practice, it should be noted, is one that works to the benefit of Democrats because the authors and performers of popular songs—at least those outside the Nashville idiom—can be counted on to denounce Republicans who use their music. Par for the course, earlier this year the Rolling Stones ordered the Trump campaign to stop using their songs. (Trump, looking perhaps for a little sympathy for the devil, paid Mick and Keith no mind.)

But the music that really matters in politics, the stuff that is crucial to campaigning, has nothing to do with the pop anthems blared at rallies. The music that makes a difference doesn't call attention to itself and generally goes without mention. The sounds underscoring political

ILLUSTRATIONS BY HAL MAYEORTH

advertisements are crucial to the emotional impact of the spots. It's a practice that has been honed in the half-century since it was pioneered.

Richard Nixon's 1968 campaign devised a new, cinematic style in campaign music (if "cinematic" is a term elastic enough to encompass low-budget horror reels). Nixon's team hired documentary filmmaker Eugene Jones to make a slew of original, riveting ads. Known as a *cinéma vérité* stylist, Jones's work for Nixon could be called *cinéma sur-réalité*, especially where the music was concerned. A Nixon spot on the chaotic Democratic convention begins to the tune of a pep-band playing a rah-rah version of "A Hot Time in the Old Town." Under jarring still images of rioting and violence, the happy tune is fractured and warped with psychedelic tape loops, echoing reverb, and electronic stuttering. The music is disorienting and disturbing and powerfully amplifies the anxiety the images alone would induce.

A string of Nixon ads used this new technique, which reached its zenith in an advertisement touting the former vice president as the law-and-order candidate. The ad, "The First Civil Right," presents still images of rioting, bloodied faces, tear-gas, bayonets, and burning buildings, all to unsettling music that might have come from *Forbidden Planet* or an episode of *The Twilight Zone*: A field drum rat-a-tats; an electronically altered piano splinks and splanks; a dolorous bass clarinet wails. The otherworldly music was a piece titled "Nebulae" from an experimental work called "Outer Space" composed by Vaclav Nelhybel. And in this, the Nixon team did something that would be copied by generations of political admen to come.

The Nelhybel piece wasn't commissioned for Nixon to use, nor



even available on a commercial disc. It had been recorded as "off-the-shelf" incidental music that could be used by television producers and filmmakers who lacked the budgets to have music composed specifically for their projects. London's Bosworth and Company was in the library-music business, putting out discs with generic jazz, symphonic favorites, sound effects, and anything else that might be needed for an advertisement or movie soundtrack. Nelhybel's "Outer Space" was on a Bosworth Backgrounds disc called *Electronic Music*.

Ever since, political ad makers have been using prefab, pseudo-cinematic music to boost the emotional impact of their products.

What works—or at least what ad directors think works—changes from election cycle to election cycle. "In the mid-'80s through the early '90s, political ad music was a lot tougher, very dark and ominous," says Mac Squier. Those were the days when Squier did a lot of "politicals." Now his company, Music for Pictures, primarily produces soundtrack cues for documentaries, film, and TV. But he still keeps his hand in with election work. Squier says that these days, "People have become inured" to heavy-handed negatives, with their zombie-apocalypse cellos and glowering slasher-flick synthesizers: "The tone is now a softer negative."

That means instead of monster-movie music as the default soundtrack for one's opponent, quirky comedic sounds have become standard. The other guy isn't so much scary as he is laughable, ludicrous, goofy. "Instead of being mean, you're whimsical," says Squier.

It's a style that's been honed in the last decade of reality TV. The music used on shows such as *Real Housewives of Wherever* is designed to

make everyone on the screen look like a fool. Which is just what the political ad makers want to do to the other guy, says John Lentz, senior music director at FirstCom: "Instead of portraying the opponent as Darth Vader, there's more of an interest in making them look like bumbling idiots."

This fall, expect to hear lots of comical music designed for doofus-signaling. Much of it will come from FirstCom, which offers its political clients a whole "Satire and Exaggeration" playlist, featuring titles such as "Devious Dorks" and "HA HA HEE HEE." Typical is the tune "Looney Bin," which comes with this helpful description: "Uptempo Cartoon-Flavored Comedic; Bouncy, Goofy, Silly, Wacky, Quirky."

Which isn't to say there won't be plenty of the traditional heavy, negative orchestral treatments blanketing airwaves for the next few months. De Wolfe Music offers several CDs' worth of political production music. Their "Political World II" collection has eight tracks of music described as "Dangerous, Sinister," and 12 tracks that are "Ominous, Suspicious."

FirstCom has a playlist titled "Attack Ads & Transitions." The attack-ad part is straightforward enough—tunes such as the unsubtly titled "Now That's Evil" (tense dystopian sci-fi sounds, "Foreboding with heavy accents").

The "Transitions" part may be less obvious, but it's fundamental to the structure of the typical 30-second political TV spot. It's not enough merely to portray the opposition as evil or idiotic; the standard strategy is to offer one's own candidate as the solution to the problem, the antidote to the opponent's poisonous personality. And that means a musical transition from Negative to Positive ("NP" to use the shorthand of the biz). FirstCom has NP tracks that come with descriptions such as "Dark and glitchy piano intro transitions to uptempo, warm, positive rock. Reassuring and confident" and "Ominous piano and percussive hits and uneasy drone lead to wholesome acoustic guitar bed, light and positive with violin melody."

Sometimes there are even two transitions: An ad starts with some scene of sweetness and light, which is then threatened by a bad guy, who is in turn defeated by the good-guy candidate, who restores the aforementioned sweetness and light. This, in industry shorthand, is a "PNP"—positive, negative, positive.

These are the tricks of the trade. And now, some 50 years into the new soundscape of political advertising, we'll see whether the techniques still work or whether viewers have tired of the negatives and positives and all the transitions in-between.

As composer-producer Mac Squier says, the sort of emotion political ad music tends to elicit these days is a simple one: "Please make them stop." ♦

All the Issues Favor Trump

Of course, he doesn't like to talk issues.

BY JEFFREY H. ANDERSON

In the wake of the Democratic convention, some foot-in-mouth comments by Donald Trump, and a poll bounce for Hillary Clinton, much of the political class has decided that the presidential race is all but over. But across most of America, voters are at least as apt to be swayed by issues as by a convention's production values or a candidate's gaffes—and essentially every issue favors Trump.

Why, then, is Clinton developing such a lead in the polls? Because she, Trump, and the media all seem to agree

Clinton says she will 'defend and expand the Affordable Care Act.' In a clear step toward a true government monopoly, she says that she would add a 'public option'—a government-run plan—to Obamacare.

upon one thing—that the issues are to be avoided. Clinton and the media avoid the issues because they know she's hurt by them. Trump avoids the issues for reasons that are harder to ascertain—perhaps because he doesn't fully realize how much they benefit him or perhaps just because he finds it easier and more enjoyable to talk about something else. But if he were to start talking policy, his electoral fortunes might turn around.

Start with immigration—the defining issue of Trump's unlikely triumph in the GOP race. According to the U.S.

Census Bureau, the percentage of the U.S. population that is foreign-born has already surpassed the percentage during the great waves of immigration in 1880 or 1920. That percentage, 13.6 percent, has almost tripled since 1970 (from 4.7 percent) and is on course to exceed 15 percent within a decade. A Gallup poll last year found that 60 percent of Americans are dissatisfied with current immigration levels, with more than five times as many wanting to see those levels decreased (39 percent) as increased (7 percent).

Compare those numbers with the two candidates' stances. Trump talks of building a border wall, taking deportation seriously, and ending President Obama's lawless executive actions on immigration. Prior to taking those unilateral actions, which effectively declared millions of illegal immigrants to be "legal," Obama said, "There are enough laws on the books by Congress that are very clear in terms of how we have to enforce our immigration system that for me to simply, through executive order, ignore those congressional mandates would not conform with my appropriate role as president." Then he did it anyway.

Hillary Clinton, in marked contrast with Trump, has said that she would expand Obama's executive actions—and she would surely appoint Supreme Court justices who (along with the four Bill Clinton and Obama appointees) would rule that she could. She has said, "I would not deport children. I do not want to deport family members, either." Apparently believing that the Obama administration has been too aggressive in dealing with illegal immigration, she says that she will "stop the raids, stop the round-ups,

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stop the deporting of people who are living here doing their lives.” She “will introduce comprehensive immigration reform with a pathway to full and equal citizenship within her first 100 days in office” and will “demand that there be a vote in the House.” She has “proposed an Office of Immigrant Affairs for the White House.” And she wants to give illegal immigrants access to Obamacare: “We should let families—regardless of immigration status—buy into the Affordable Care Act exchanges.”

That leads us to Obama’s centerpiece legislation, the second big issue favoring Trump. Charles Gaba, an Obamacare supporter, estimates that the average premium increase that insurers are requesting for Obamacare plans in 2017 is a whopping 23 percent. Many insurers are bailing out. The slow-motion death spiral is proceeding. *Real Clear Politics* lists 206 polls taken on Obamacare so far during Obama’s second term—3 found it to be popular, 202 found it to be unpopular, 1 has found a tie.

Trump says, “We will repeal and replace disastrous Obamacare,” and he has been briefed on the House GOP alternative and likes it. Clinton says she will “defend and expand the Affordable Care Act.” In a clear step toward a true government monopoly, she says that she would add a “public option”—a government-run plan—to Obamacare. The Democrats couldn’t even pass the “public option” when they had 60 votes in the Senate and a 75-seat margin in the House. That’s how politically toxic it was—and likely remains.

Obamacare has thrown a wet blanket over the economy, but it is hardly the sole example of a heavy-handed program of regulation and redistribution that has stymied economic growth under Obama. According to the Commerce Department’s Bureau of Economic Analysis, after adjusting for inflation, average yearly GDP growth under Obama has been an anemic 1.5 percent—last among the 12 postwar presidents and less than

half of President Jimmy Carter’s tally (3.3 percent). Even Obama’s *best* year of growth (2.6 percent, in 2015) was below average across the past 70 years. Median household income, moreover, has fared worse under Obama than the GDP has.

In response, Trump talks of trade deals that put America first, making American businesses more internationally competitive by cutting the corporate tax rate to 15 percent (down from 35 percent today), reducing per-



sonal taxes, introducing a temporary moratorium on federal regulations, and lifting restrictions on all sources of American energy—in short, keeping governments, both others’ and our own, from undermining the efforts of American workers.

In marked contrast, Clinton wants to increase taxes, government spending, and regulation. She was for the Trans-Pacific Partnership, a central part of Obama’s economic agenda, before she was against it. (Virginia governor Terry McAuliffe, a close friend of Clinton, has said she’s still for it.) Continuing Obama’s pattern of picking winners and losers, Clinton wants to “establish the U.S. as the *clean* energy superpower of the world” (italics added). She argues that “trickle-down economics,” meaning policies that led to 3.5 percent average yearly GDP growth under President Reagan (and 7.3 percent growth once the Reagan recovery really hit full stride),

“does not help our economy go.” On economic matters, she is effectively running for Obama’s third term. After eight years of Obama’s economic record, that’s a tough sell.

Moreover, immigration, Obamacare, and the economy are hardly the only issues favoring Trump. At a time when violent crime has begun to rise again, Trump is focused on restoring law and order, while Clinton is focused on increasing leniency in criminal sentencing. At a time when new terrorist attacks are occurring every few days or weeks, Trump isn’t skittish about saying “Islamic terrorism” and can’t be held responsible for ISIS’s ascendancy, while Clinton is and can. At a time when we are approaching \$20 trillion in national debt—nearly double what the tally was when Obama took office—Clinton is calling for “free” college. At a time when the vast

majority of Americans oppose providing taxpayer funding for abortion, Clinton is calling for killing off the Hyde Amendment, the long-standing protection against such practices that for decades enjoyed bipartisan support. (What’s more, then-senator Clinton repeatedly voted against what is now the federal ban on partial-birth abortions.)

Even beyond policy issues, Trump could capitalize on Clinton’s well-earned reputation as a mendacious political climber. Her astonishing claim that FBI director James Comey had called her statements to the American people about sending classified emails from her personal server “truthful” and “consistent,” when Comey actually said her statements were “not true,” is just the latest example.

Clinton, meanwhile, has only one real “issue,” if you will, in her favor—her claim that Trump’s disposition makes him unfit to hold the nation’s highest office. Indeed, the entire election will likely come down to this: Can Clinton make voters’ concerns about her challenger’s character trump the long list of issues that would otherwise favor his election? ♦

The Hit Emperor

Ichiro Suzuki, an appreciation.

BY LEE SMITH



It can hardly be a coincidence that just as the emperor of Japan hinted at abdicating his throne this past weekend, the island nation's greatest baseball player ascended to a kind of diamond royalty. Ichiro Suzuki, a 42-year-old outfielder with 16 major league seasons under his belt (Seattle Mariners, New York Yankees, and Miami Marlins), got his 3,000th big league hit, a triple deep to right that fell just short of being a home run.

Lee Smith is a senior editor at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

Together with the 1,278 hits he accumulated in nine seasons in the Japanese league, he leads the world in total hits. If Pete Rose is the Hit King, Ichiro is the Hit Emperor.

Other members of the 3,000-hit club saluted Ichiro's achievement, from Hank Aaron to Dave Winfield, to some who played against him, such as Craig Biggio and Wade Boggs. Even Rose finally came through when it mattered. He was miffed when fans were counting down how many more hits Ichiro needed (if you combine his major league and Japan league totals) to pass

him. "They're trying to make me the Hit Queen," Rose complained. "I'm not trying to take anything away from Ichiro, he's had a Hall of Fame career, but the next thing you know, they'll be counting his high-school hits."

But this week Rose welcomed Ichiro to Valhalla. "Anybody who gets 3,000 hits is a great hitter," Rose said. "Ichiro is a tremendous hitter. What 3,000 hits does is automatically put him into the Hall of Fame, at least I think it should. He's a great hitter with speed and a great arm. I have a lot of respect for him. I know how hard it is to get 3,000 hits. It's nice to have a non-home-run hitter get there again."

And yet as another member of the 3,000-hit club, Al Kaline, said, "Most of the guys that get 3,000 hits are the guys that are not power hitters. They get pitched to a little bit more, and [pitchers] don't want to walk them because the threat of the home run is not as deep."

Ichiro probably could have been a power hitter if he'd wanted to be. In a 16-year major league career, his home-run total is 113. The most in any season was 15 in 2005 with the Mariners, but I'm betting he could have averaged at least 15-20 per year. In nine years playing in the Japanese league, he hit 118 home runs, with 25 in 1995 and 21 in 1999. (It's regularly noted that he started his major league career at age 27, which somewhat obscures the fact he was playing at Japan's highest level at the age of 18.) The pitching in Japan isn't as strong as major league pitching, but it still takes power to hit the ball out of the park, and Japanese stadiums aren't much smaller than American parks. Green Kobe, the home park for Ichiro's Japanese club, Orix Blue Wave, is 311 feet down both lines, 383 feet in the gaps, and 400 feet to straightaway center.

Don't take my word for Ichiro's power. Here's Derek Jeter paying tribute to his former Yankees teammate in the magazine he publishes, *The Players' Tribune*:

During the All-Star Game in Seattle in 2001, I was standing around with some Mariners players when they started talking about how Ichiro

should enter the Home Run Derby. I thought they were joking.

"He'd win if he entered," somebody said.

Shortly after, I found out what the guy meant. Everyone watched as Ichi put on his own personal home run clinic.

It's a really nice article by one certain first-ballot Hall of Famer about another. Jeter remembers Ichiro's progress learning the English language. It's Ichiro's rookie season, and after doubling against the Yankees, he dusts himself off and greets Jeter: "What's going on, my main man?" "*Main man?*" Jeter writes. "All I could do was smile. Where was this guy learning this stuff?" Apparently much of it came from then-Mariners outfielder Mike Cameron. Jeter writes: "Mike had taught him to say things like, 'What's up, my brother from another mother?'"

Jeter recounts the 2012 playoff game against the Tigers when he broke his ankle and was slow leaving the clubhouse.

Derek Jeter wrote that at 'the All-Star Game in Seattle in 2001, I was standing around with some Mariners players when they started talking about how Ichiro should enter the Home Run Derby. I thought they were joking.'

I was finished icing my ankle and kind of taking my time. There was no rush to go anywhere. We had just lost and I knew I wouldn't be able to play until the next season. Soon the clubhouse was almost empty. Ichi, his interpreter and I were sitting in the small changing room. Ichi hadn't even taken off his entire uniform yet.

Finally, I got my things together and stood up with my crutches to leave. It was only then that I realized Ichiro had been waiting for me. When I got up, he got up and watched me leave.

I think Ichiro wanted to hit a home run for his 3,000th hit, just as Jeter had

done. The evidence can be seen in a chart showing the distribution of all of Ichiro's 3,000 hits. The singles and doubles are evenly distributed across the field, the majority of triples are to the right side, and all of Ichiro's home runs but one are in the area from the right-field gap to the right-field line, where they're almost stacked like poker chips. I suspect that very few, if any, of these home runs were accidents. Ichiro always seems to know where to put the ball in play to maximum effect, and the chart suggests that when he went to the plate with an idea to look for something to pull out of the park, and got it, he put it in nearly the same place 113 times. On August 7, it seemed like he was looking for the same, and just missed it. His triple fell a few feet short of the right-field bleachers.

After his 25 years in the highest levels of professional baseball, with more hits still to come, it's a fitting reminder that even when Ichiro doesn't get it exactly right, it's still evidence of his mastery. ♦

Business Community All in on Cancer Moon Shot

By Thomas J. Donohue

President and CEO
U.S. Chamber of Commerce

In 1969, America put a man on the Moon, a breathtaking achievement that many said couldn't be done. The great challenge of our lifetime is putting an end to cancer. This single disease kills an estimated 600,000 people every year. As with the Moon Shot, the nation must come together again, overcome the odds, and achieve the impossible.

In the president's State of the Union address earlier this year, he proposed the National Cancer Moon Shot—urging everyone in the cancer community to join forces and redouble their efforts to end this terrible disease. The aim is to bring about a decade's worth of advances in five years. This can only be done by bringing those with an interest in fighting cancer together and collaborating on solutions.

This is where business comes in. Few entities have delivered more innovation

and progress than the American business community. The private sector leads research and pioneers lifesaving treatments. In fact, biopharmaceutical research represents the largest share of U.S. private investment in R&D. This investment has led to treatments that have helped drive down the rate of cancer deaths by 23% since its peak in 1991. Today, more than 1,800 new cancer drugs are being developed.

Businesses and organizations can also implement their own cancer-fighting policies. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce has long been dedicated to making cancer a problem of the past. Last year, we were honored to receive the CEO Roundtable on Cancer's Gold Standard accreditation. To earn this prestigious recognition, an organization must promote wellness among its employees, provide insurance options that enable early cancer detection, support cancer survivors in the workplace, and raise awareness of these initiatives. Likewise, many of our members have been in the

trenches fighting this disease for a long time. And many others are eager to help.

We all have a stake in solving this challenge. In addition to the personal toll it takes on so many families, cancer has a dramatic impact on our economy and the country. The Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality estimates that the direct medical costs for cancer in the United States are nearly \$90 billion. Meanwhile, 1.6 million new cases of cancer will be diagnosed this year. The need for action and results has never been greater.

Americans have always set lofty goals and defied the odds to accomplish them—let's apply that grit and tenacity to this urgent national challenge. The Chamber urges the next president to continue this fight. We stand ready to help. It is only by working together that the threat of cancer can become a distant memory.



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A CIA Agent of Change?

From #NeverTrump to #NeverTooLate.

BY MICHAEL WARREN



Evan McMullin after announcing his presidential bid in Salt Lake City, August 10

When Evan McMullin was growing up just outside of Seattle, he wanted to be a filmmaker. He and his friends would film their own movies around the neighborhood and edit them on his VCR. “Some of them were pretty good,” he says.

Moviemaking, it turns out, wasn’t his calling, but the 40-year-old McMullin has already lived a cinematic life. He spent two years as a Mormon missionary in Brazil. He volunteered for the United Nations as a refugee resettlement officer in Jordan. He’s worked as a deckhand on an Alaskan fishing boat and an investment banker at Goldman Sachs. And for more than a decade, McMullin was an undercover CIA agent in the Middle East and South Asia, running covert operations in war zones

against terrorist groups like al Qaeda.

Now, the former Capitol Hill staffer (yes, McMullin did that, too) is adding this to his résumé: an underdog independent presidential bid. The odds are stacked against him. His major opponents are universally known—one a buffoon with mastery of the media, the other a ruthless power-seeker. The hurdles seem impossible to overcome, and nobody’s giving him a break. A Hollywood screenwriter couldn’t have come up with the script.

McMullin almost can’t believe it himself. “This is not something I intended for myself,” he tells me in an interview days after launching his bid in early August. “This is not what I expected or intended.”

What McMullin intended, at first, was to help find a credible center-right candidate to run against Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton. In his capacity as an active Republican policy adviser, he initiated discussions

this summer with a group of anti-Trump operatives led by a Republican strategist named Joel Searby and concentrated in a super-PAC called Better for America. At some point during those talks, someone suggested McMullin himself run for president. Others in the group agreed, and McMullin said he would think about it. He took about 10 days to “wrestle” with the idea, talking it over with close friends, potential advisers, even members of Congress. (McMullin won’t name names, but his campaign says it is “in talks” with members of the House and Senate who could publicly support him.)

Before he made up his mind, McMullin says, he wanted to understand how a long-shot bid like his could succeed. His team has developed a multipronged plan for getting McMullin on the ballot, including petitions in states with upcoming deadlines, legal challenges to ballot-access deadlines that have already passed, cooperating with third parties already on the ballot, and even a write-in campaign. And through Better for America, a campaign staff, infrastructure, and donor base are ready to go.

“Once I thought that those boxes were checked, then it was all about what the right thing to do was,” McMullin tells me. “And the more I thought and, candidly, prayed about doing this, I just had conviction and peace that it was the right thing to do.”

On Sunday, August 7, the team—including Searby, GOP strategist Rick Wilson, and a few of McMullin’s friends—held a final meeting in the conference room of a mid-priced hotel in Washington, D.C. McMullin confirmed he was ready to take the plunge, despite the obstacles of money, time, and recognition.

“It is never too late to do the right thing,” he told the group.

And the right thing, McMullin says, is offering Americans an alternative to Clinton and Trump. “There is another choice,” McMullin said in his campaign kick-off event on August 10 in Salt Lake City (where the Utah native’s campaign is headquartered). “And I firmly believe that the time has

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COURTESY EVAN McMULLIN VIA TWITTER

come in our country for a new generation in leadership.”

What kind of leadership does he have in mind? Politically, McMullin is a down-the-line conservative: He’s pro-life, considers himself an originalist on judicial questions, and argues that regulatory uncertainty and government interference hurts job creation. He cites Friedrich Hayek’s *The Road to Serfdom* and Milton Friedman as formative influences on his political views, in addition to his Mormon faith. One of the reasons he believes Libertarian party nominee Gary Johnson is a nonstarter as an alternative is the former New Mexico governor’s position on religious liberty, which McMullin calls “awful” and dismissive of our founding.

“The other thing is, if Gary Johnson were president we’d have to drug test him once every four months,” adds McMullin.

On entitlements and health care, he says he aligns with the reform proposals of House speaker Paul Ryan and the Republican conference. He says Trump’s opposition to any entitlement reform is “ridiculous.” “We’ve got to do it in a way so that our seniors today are protected, that their benefits are protected. And so we need reforms that put entitlements on a more sustainable track,” McMullin says.

But it’s in foreign policy and national security that McMullin is the most fluent. When I ask which books have influenced his thinking, he mentions Robert Kagan’s *The World America Made*. But he says his experience in the clandestine service, more than anything, has informed his view that the fight against terrorism requires a change from the current strategy. “One major motivator for my entering the race is simply that I feel like we’re doing a terrible job fighting terrorism now, and I feel like both Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump are woefully unprepared to confront that challenge,” he says.

McMullin says the gains the United States and the West made during his time in the CIA—he left the agency in 2010—have been lost under Barack Obama’s leadership. He argues that

ISIS could have been destroyed early on, when it was a chaotic movement in the deserts of Iraq.

“Since then what has happened? ISIS has become a massive terrorist army, we have the largest humanitarian disaster in the world since World War II as a result, there’s all kind of political strife in Europe and now in the United States. . . . I mean, these things matter. These decisions really, really, really matter. And I don’t think President Obama was ready for the challenge that he stepped into with the world the way it is,” McMullin

says. “And I don’t think Hillary Clinton or Donald Trump are either.”

For McMullin’s last-ditch effort to succeed, he’ll need American voters to agree with that assessment. In three months, they’ll have to learn his name, hear his message, and see him on their ballots. They’ll have to decide that an unknown former CIA agent and Hill staffer is fit for the nation’s highest office, while the candidates nominated by the country’s three largest political parties aren’t. And if, somehow, McMullin pulls it off? Well, that’d make a pretty good movie. ♦

The New Campus Confidential

A criminal past? Don’t ask, don’t tell.

BY NAOMI SCHAEFER RILEY

New York University will be making it easier for applicants with criminal records to gain admission to the school: NYU announced at the beginning of August it will now ignore the Common Application’s questions about criminal history. Instead, the school will ask more specific questions that focus only on violent incidents. The idea is both to give people “a second chance” and for the university to live up to “its mission as an engine of social mobility,” said MJ Knoll-Finn, a vice president of the university, in a press release.

Giving people a second chance is a noble goal. President Barack Obama, in commuting the sentences of 214 federal prisoners this month, said we need to do more to “understand the human stories behind this problem.” Ensuring that students from difficult backgrounds who have

been convicted of small offenses have access to education after fulfilling their sentences is an important part of reintegrating them into society. Programs like the Bard Prison Initiative actually provide a liberal arts education to inmates, giving them a leg up when they are released.

But NYU has changed its policies not simply for the good of these applicants, but because it wants a more racially diverse campus. When the school began the process of changing this policy last year, Knoll-Finn cited “concerns being raised on a national level about the sometimes disparate impact of the criminal justice system.” Urged on by the Department of Education, many universities are considering dropping questions about criminal records on the grounds that asking those questions means admitting fewer racial minorities. In order to increase diversity, the logic now goes, we need to increase the population of students who have been convicted of crimes.

In “Beyond the Box,” a “Resource

Naomi Schaefer Riley is author of the book The New Trail of Tears: How Washington Is Destroying American Indians.

Guide for Increasing Access to Higher Education for Justice-Involved Individuals,” the Education Department notes, “Disparities in the criminal justice system, ranging from arrests to sentencing decisions, disproportionately impact individuals of color, and, in turn, disproportionately require

we have to start dipping into a population of criminals? And who exactly is benefiting from this policy anyway? Is it likely to help minorities or hurt?

Affirmative action, of course, started out as a strategy to ensure that education and employment opportunities were open to all qualified applicants,

their applications. (By contrast, one recent Harvard study of 30 elite colleges found that “legacy” applicants—often disdained as receiving a kind of old-boys-network preference—actually had slightly higher average SAT scores than the overall pool of applicants.) As Taylor and Sander write, “racial preferences are not remotely close to being the ‘tie-breakers’ they are sometimes claimed to be.”

And there are terrible effects for those minority kids sent to schools for which they are underqualified: Graduation rates suffer; and even those on track to graduate are often forced into less demanding (and less remunerative) degrees than they might have pursued at schools better matched with their academic skills.

But most damaging, affirmative action has led many students to make the toxic assumption that minority students are not as capable. As NYU’s very own Jonathan Haidt wrote recently in the *Wall Street Journal*, “As a result of these disparate admissions standards, many students spend four years in a social environment where race conveys useful information about the academic capacity of their peers.” Admitting, in the name of diversity, students who are even less qualified “is likely to make racial gaps larger, which would strengthen the negative stereotypes that students of color find when they arrive on campus.”

Now imagine what would happen if white and Asian students on campus had the impression that not only were their black peers less likely to have performed well on standardized tests or on their high school report cards, but were also more likely to have criminal records.

We can join the campus chorus in denouncing as racist those impressions. Or we can do something that improves college life for minorities. And that means recognizing the root cause of those unspoken attitudes: In their quest for campus diversity, college administrators are willing to sacrifice the academic success of minority students and to produce more racial tension on campus than already exists.

◆ GARY FRIEDMAN / LOS ANGELES TIMES / GETTY



Hanging out, waiting for the college fair to kick off

students of color to respond to questions about criminal history.”

To hear the beyond-the-boxers tell it, institutional racism is to blame for the large number of minority youth arrested, prosecuted, and convicted. They fail to mention the fact that African Americans commit a disproportionate amount of crime. Nor are the disparities just a result of over-aggressive drug prosecutions: Even if we released all the people in jail for low-level drug offenses, the percentage of the incarcerated who are minorities would barely budge. Nor do the activists at the Department of Education mention that many people convicted of nonviolent offenses have actually bargained themselves down from the original violent charges on which they were arrested.

But let’s leave all that aside for a moment. Isn’t it just a bit offensive to say that in order to increase the percentage of racial minorities on campus

regardless of whether they had the right “connections.” As Richard H. Sander and Stuart Taylor Jr. note in their book, *Mismatch*, universities in the 1960s “reached out to counselors at black high schools in places like Harlem or Boston’s Roxbury district ... who had always assumed, with reason, that elite private colleges would never take their students seriously.”

But then, as Taylor and Sander note, “university leaders realized that outreach alone would bring no more than a small number of blacks to their campuses.” The next step then was lowering academic standards. Even while university administrators insisted that they were not sacrificing quality in order to get a more diverse student body, the results were clear. A 2009 book, *No Longer Separate, Not Yet Equal*, found that blacks were receiving the equivalent of a 310-point bonus on their SATs when elite colleges were weighing

The Libertarian Trump?

Hanging out with John McAfee

BY MATT LABASH

Orlando

I've long admired the Libertarian party from afar—the more afar, the better. For any liberty lover, it's hard not to like a party whose live-and-let-live, leave-us-alone ethos permeates their every utterance, even if you're not down for all the disquisitions on Austrian economics, privatizing highways, and the status of pro-hemp amendments in the omnibus appropriations bill.

For those like me, who vote Republican more often than not, telling friends you have strong libertarian leanings marks you as a free-thinker. But in elections in which

could actually disrupt this already disruptive election year, pulling from both Democrats and Republicans. "That's what they say every four years," he scoffed. "And then it's the same, and poof, they go away, and nobody hears from them for four more years." I didn't argue with Ron, since this has indeed become a journalism cliché, on a par with reporters interviewing their cab drivers.

Polling suggests that unusually large swaths of America regard this year's major-party candidates as a choice between myocardial infarction and colorectal cancer, which explains why 270 restive journalists piled into the Rosen Centre Hotel. (It was roughly 10 times the usual Libertarian convention press contingent.) We were all wondering the same thing: In this year of discontent, is it the Libertarians' time to shine? The best a Libertarian candidate has ever fared in a presidential election since the party's inception in 1971 was the 1.2 million votes former New Mexico governor Gary Johnson pulled—only 1 percent of the total—after first washing out of the Republican primary in 2012. (Spoiler alert: Johnson would win the nomination this weekend, along with his vice-presidential running mate, former Massachusetts Republican governor Bill Weld. Republican governors were decimated in the Republican primaries, but they seem to have found a jobs program with the Libertarians.)

Meanwhile, MegaCon—an 80,000-strong gathering of comic book, sci-fi, gamer, and anime nerds, most of them in costume—was at the convention center right across the street. So the hotel's hallways brimmed with adult children in capes and codpieces, prosthetics and unfortunate leotards who, amazingly, didn't seem as eccentric as many of the Libertarians, with their knotty, macramé-hanger ponytails-for-men, their Asperger's social awkwardness, and their Ayn Rand postage-stamp earrings.

In the vendor hall, they buy books like *The Haiku Economist: Economic Principles Economically Expressed* (sample: *Markets will progress / by creative destruction / as Schumpeter says*). And two weeks before the jihadist massacre at Orlando's Pulse nightclub, people were wearing T-shirts with inscriptions like "Nobody needs an AR-15? Nobody needs a whiny bitch either, yet here you are." Even after the attack, the Libertarian party, full of Second Amendment



John McAfee, in white shirt, with two delegates from the 'Bearded Caucus' and his wife Janice, at right. (Later, the delegate between McAfee and his wife stripped down to a G-string on stage and live on C-SPAN—and was promptly ejected.)

Republicans offer up mediocrities, demagogues, or mouth-breathers (the hat trick now being pulled by the tangelo-colored reality-show star), proclaiming your small "I" libertarian bent gives you something even more valuable: plausible deniability.

So I headed to the Libertarian National Convention in Orlando over Memorial Day weekend with high hopes. I grabbed a cab at the airport, and when my Haitian driver Ron learned my mission, he asked, "Why do they bother with this?" I informed him that some say Libertarians

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MATT LABASH / THE WEEKLY STANDARD

purists, would put out a press release calling for an end to “gun-free zones,” since a heavily armed citizenry is a safer one. You can accuse professional Libertarians of being suspect dressers, bad poets, and all-around goofuses. But you can’t accuse them of soft-pedaling their convictions or bowing to political correctness.

Over two-fifths of the country self-identify as independent, while roughly a fifth say they have a libertarian philosophy. This should be great news for the Libertarian party, which generally bills itself as fiscally conservative and socially liberal. But it becomes easier to see why they can’t shake their fate as the duopoly’s runty, third-party little brother when you take a gander at the official list of 16 presidential candidates who met the bare-minimum threshold this year, such as having campaign websites and filing with the FEC. (An exception was made for crowd-favorite Darryl Perry, who is like the uncut cocaine of libertarianism; he had refused to file since the FEC “lacks constitutional authority.”)

Prior to arrival, I had visited all the candidates’ websites, or at least the ones that hadn’t been shut down by domain hosts for nonpayment. They featured some doozies—like Perry himself, who wants to become president so he can abolish the U.S. government. (Beat that, Tea Partiers.) Or the guy who listed as his “key points” that he’s an HVAC and boiler contractor and was born in 1972, so he is “able to relate to older and younger citizens.” My personal favorite was Robert Milnes, who refused to go to the “Losertarian National Convention.” The reasons were myriad: Anemic support from the grassroots. Powerful “character assassination.” A convention “probably packed with . . . Gary Johnson lackeys/dupes.” A friend who was “recovering from germ warfare.” He “can’t afford to go, really,” since he has no one to watch his house and his cat. And this is going to come as a shocker: “no wife or girlfriend.”

Unlike Milnes, I was undeterred by vicious infighting, self-deluded factionalism, and arguments over who is purest. We just call that the Republican party. Neither, however, did I wish to mark my time with the fringiest of the fringesters, such as the man who couldn’t get a cat-sitter. Instead, I elected to experience the Libertarian convention through the prism of one of the party’s three frontrunners, John McAfee, a name that will probably be instantly recognizable to every computer user in the world over the age of 35.

McAfee is a cybersecurity pioneer, having invented McAfee AntiVirus, the once-ubiquitous program. He is the ‘Real Most Interesting Man in the World,’ as self-described in a parody video, a play off the Dos Equis pitchman whom he somewhat resembles. He is a man who could fairly be thought of as the Libertarian Donald Trump.

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Like Trump, McAfee is a successful entrepreneur. And McAfee’s frosted boy-band tips, which make the tanned and trim 70-year-old seem perpetually youthful, are similarly of a color not seen in nature. Like Trump, he will say anything and eschews convention. At one Libertarian debate, McAfee was allotted a two-minute opening statement. The statement he gave, in its entirety, was: “I am unprepared for everything, always, so I’m not going to waste your time.”

The serial womanizer Trump has had three marriages, the last being to a much-younger Slovenian supermodel. The serial womanizer McAfee has had three marriages, the last being to a much-younger African-American prostitute, whom he “rescued” from a life of sex slavery. While Trump once bragged that he could stand in the middle of Fifth Avenue, shoot somebody, and not lose any voters, McAfee actually has been suspected of shooting somebody, or at least arranging it.

After creating a Col. Kurtz-like jungle paradise in Belize, complete with armed guards and a creepily young seven-woman harem, McAfee was named by the Belizean government as a “person

of interest” in the shooting of a neighbor in 2012, shortly after McAfee’s dogs were poisoned by an unknown party. Before he could be questioned, purportedly fearing for his life after prior dustups with government officials he alleged were corrupt and trying to frame him, McAfee went on the lam, becoming for a time late that year the most famous celebrity fugitive since O.J. Simpson. He took reporters on a wild, monthlong ride via tweets and blog posts and leaks as he hid out in the jungle and safe houses, disguised, before ending up back in the United States, un-extradited. He then started up a tech incubator, became a minor media celebrity (cable news appearances, regular columns for the likes of *Business Insider*), and decided to run for president, all while adamantly maintaining his innocence.

Hanging with McAfee seemed like an ideal way to pass a Libertarian weekend. Especially when the alternative was attending breakout sessions with titles like “Anarchy vs.

Minarchy,” “Parliamentary Practicum,” and “Bitcoin for the Future.”

The second you meet McAfee, he takes you into his confidence, laughing easily in a hyena-like howl, throwing his arm around you, yet still speed-walking as though he’s being chased, which occasionally he is (he’s told reporters he’s being pursued by everyone from the Belizean government to Mexican drug cartels). On the phone weeks earlier, McAfee guaranteed me that he was a lock for the nomination. Since there are no binding Libertarian primaries, every delegate at the convention was essentially a superdelegate, expected to vote their consciences and select the nominee. Retail politics mattered here as they do nowhere else. I asked McAfee how he planned to win, since he was running behind Gary Johnson and former male-model/*Fox Business* producer Austin Petersen. “I haven’t got a clue!” he said, transparently. “Listen, I’m 70. I know one thing about life: Whatever happens, anything important, it will be unexpected and unanticipated. If it’s not, it’s not worth anything.” McAfee often sounds like a cross between Lao-Tzu and The Dude from *The Big Lebowski*.

Johnson was the favorite, but the Radical Caucus, roughly half of all Libertarians, was restless and distrustful. In a congenitally antiestablishment party, Johnson, with his gulping sincerity and ’50s-gym-teacher haircut, is considered an establishment candidate in a year when the traditionally stodgy Republicans have fallen for the biggest antiestablishmentarian of them all. This cycle, it seems, Libertarians have a touch of antiestablishment envy, despite their former and future nominee boasting to reporters that he smokes pot, vetoed more bills than all governors combined, and was the CEO of a company selling recreational/medical cannabis products.

McAfee, meanwhile, clearly boasted the most outlaw street-cred of the field and reminded me that much of politics is about surface appearances, which can be deceiving. “Twice in my life,” McAfee said, “I have picked up the most beautiful woman in the world. Wined and dined her, taken her home. And then her dick pops out. All right? Now that’s a shock for a man. So I *know* that appearances mean nothing. . . . Once you have that experience, you look at life totally different. If that’s possible. . . . What else have I missed?”

Throughout the weekend, McAfee’s colorful

entourage was in tow. There was black-clad John Pool, his bodyguard of 15 years. Pool packs more heat than a National Guard armory and claims career experience working for “private Italian people.” I’d read in a *Men’s Health* story that Pool once pulled his own tooth with a wrench in front of a reporter. Actually, he said, he’s pulled seven of them through the years, plus a leftover jaw fragment. He opened his mouth and showed me his jack-o’-lantern maw. I suggested maybe McAfee should put him on a dental plan. “Why?” he asked, genuinely befuddled. “A waste of money, isn’t it? I can just pull it myself. . . .

Pain is a state of mind.”

There was McAfee’s wife, 33-year-old Janice Dyson McAfee, who has steely campaign discipline, limiting McAfee to one tequila at the hotel bar before insisting he switch to beer whenever he has a speaking engagement. (Sometimes, he even listened to her.) Janice’s tasteful political-wife attire and gentle smile belie her past. For 10 years, she was a prostitute, and her vicious pimp, Suavé, regularly batted her around. “He was an extremely bad man, he hit me a lot,” said Janice, grateful, like a good Libertarian, to be surrounded by so many firearms. (In addition to

Pool, she and McAfee usually carry as well.)

Janice met McAfee in a Miami cafe in 2012 shortly after he’d escaped from Belize, been arrested in Guatemala, and was deported to the United States (McAfee is not wanted by U.S. authorities). Having no idea who he was, she asked if she could bum a cigarette. McAfee smokes discount Pyramids like he’s getting paid by the lung cookie, so he offered one. She offered him . . . well, the kind of thing grateful working girls offer. He took a pass and gave her \$1,000 to cuddle instead. “He was so tired,” says Janice. “You could visually see it, he was exhausted from running.” Janice, too, eventually ran away from Suavé, taking up with McAfee.

Also ever-present was director Billy Corben and his *Spike TV* crew, who have been shooting since last August for a documentary miniseries on McAfee’s life. McAfee refers to them as his “reality TV crew.” He enjoys tweaking Billy, and journalists generally, going so far as to feign phone calls from the bathroom in which he discusses large cocaine shipments, knowing he’s miked-up and that Billy will hear.

Billy Corben is a former child actor who has directed

documentaries like *Cocaine Cowboys* (about Miami drug wars of the '80s) and *Dawg Fight* (about backyard brawlers in a Miami-Dade County ghetto). A quick-witted fireplug who regularly sports Hialeah Gardens baseball jerseys, Billy wears his South Florida pedigree as both a merit badge and a hair shirt. He bypasses trendy South Beach bars for the “crusty characters” at dive bars, saying he will inevitably end up sitting next to a “deposed Third World leader, a drug smuggler, a guy who just came out of federal lockup on a Medicare fraud rap. . . . That’s Florida. It’s always been a sunny place for shady people.”

Pointing out that more fugitives from *America’s Most Wanted* are caught in Florida than anywhere else, Billy added, “It’s the end of the line. The longer you run from anything, you have to wind up in Florida. John was the same way, only he wasn’t running south, he was running north. And he still wound up in Florida.” (McAfee and Janice have now settled in Lexington, Tennessee.) In fact, before he even knew McAfee, during the fugitive coverage back in 2012, Billy and his colleagues had an office pool, betting on how long it would take McAfee to end up in Miami. “Within like a week,” said Billy, “John’s on Lincoln Road [where Billy’s production office is], with throngs of media following him. Is it any wonder that an election cycle later, he’s back in Florida, but this time, instead of John McAfee, international fugitive, it’s John McAfee, presidential candidate?”

It’s been that kind of year. “And like Trump,” said Billy, who has now logged more hours with McAfee than many members of his family, “he’s a self-destructive guy whose self-destruction has been rewarded again and again. So why change?”

Just how self-destructive McAfee is has been explored plenty. Namely, by two journalists who spent time with him in Belize: *Wired*’s Joshua Davis (the film rights to his story were optioned by Warner Bros.) and Jeff Wise, who has written about McAfee for everyone from *Fast Company* to *Gizmodo* to *Psychology Today*, the last of which had Wise, initially friendly to his subject, suggesting McAfee suffers from “profound psychological dysfunction.” Cobbled from their work, along with my interviews with him, McAfee’s past is quite a tale:

He was born in Wales to an American serviceman and a British nurse. The family settled in Roanoke, where his violently alcoholic father, who routinely roughed up McAfee and his mom, eventually shot himself when McAfee was 15. “I felt unfathomable relief,” he told me one night over drinks. “It ended that man. It freed this one.”

In college, McAfee himself started heavily sousing. He pursued a Ph.D. in mathematics at Northeast Louisiana State before getting bounced for sleeping with one of his undergrad students, whom he later married, then divorced.

A job coding punchcards for UNIVAC in Tennessee ended when he was arrested for buying marijuana.

He had a blur of other stints: programmer for NASA’s Institute for Space Studies, consultant for Booz Allen Hamilton, selling drugs and jewelry out of a van in Mexico. After developing a bottle-of-scotch-a-day and cocaine habit, he hit bottom, went to AA, and swears he’s never taken drugs again. When I witnessed a delegate pass a joint his way on one of his frequent cigarette breaks by the hotel pool, McAfee didn’t seem remotely interested. He’d sworn off drinking for a time, too, something he’s made a great display of over the years to profilers. Yet he seemed to match me tequila (his) for bourbon (mine) whenever we hit the bar. When did he fall off the wagon? About two years ago,



McAfee accompanied by his documentary-making entourage

he says. “Why?” I asked him. “I was 68 years old,” he says. Figuring his biblically allotted threescore-and-ten were just about up, he decided “I want a drink.”

In the late '80s, while working at Lockheed Martin, McAfee encountered “the Pakistani Brain,” one of the first computer viruses. He built a program to destroy it—VirusScan. And he further innovated in how he distributed it—giving it away on electronic bulletin boards while building a subscriber base for updates and technical support. This gave rise to his namesake company, which a bored McAfee cashed out of in the mid-'90s, perhaps a tad early (he made \$100 million, though Intel later bought the company for \$7.6 billion). That’s when things really got weird. McAfee became a peripatetic thrill-seeker/jack-of-all-trades. He’d take jet-skiing trips across hundreds of miles of open ocean. He ran a yoga ashram in the Rockies, writing four yoga books along the way. “All yoga books are garbage,” he now tells me. “I don’t believe that spirituality can be taught from the outside. You’ve just gotta look in the mirror.”

He started an aerotrekking business in the New Mexican

desert, becoming a daredevil pilot himself, flying what are essentially open-cockpit motorized tricycles with wings, at perilous altitudes as low as 10 feet off the ground. It was all fun and games until McAfee's nephew steered himself and a client into the side of a canyon, getting McAfee hit with a \$5 million wrongful death suit. (McAfee tells me he's been sued 240 times.)

McAfee shortly thereafter pulled up stakes and went full expat in scenic Belize. Depending on which version of events you believe, he went to Belize to dodge civil judgments or to live the good life, selling off a host of lavish properties around the world after the crash of 2008, consolidating his diminished wealth. He was hardly a snorkeling/sailfishing retiree in Belize. He started a water taxi service and a slew of other businesses. He hired an attractive Harvard scientist he met in a bar to make herbal antibiotics from jungle plants, even setting her up in a lab. (Some accounts have him looking to make female Viagra.)

He built a jungle compound and acquired a harem of local young women, to educate them, house them, give them hope, and engage in group sex. "It's stupid, okay? You don't want to do it," he laughs. "It was misery. Every excuse I could find to go to town at night—I've got a business meeting—I took. I never wanted to go home. They had different houses and every one of them had cooked dinner for me. . . . That's a problem."

He also attracted the attention of the local Gang Suppression Unit. McAfee says it's because he refused to pay a \$2 million bribe to local authorities as the cost of doing business, despite having poured tons of cash into the community. Authorities have said it's because they suspected, between all of his dogs and his surly heavily armed guards, many with criminal histories, that he was running a drug operation out of his antibiotics lab. In April 2012 they raided his property, handcuffing McAfee and associates, leaving them out in the sun for 14 hours, and even shooting one of McAfee's dogs.

The authorities found no illegal drugs and later cut McAfee loose. If he was already frighteningly eccentric, this didn't help. But he became even more charitable, he says, donating scores of computers to the local government, which he claims to have loaded with keystroking spyware. While he didn't catch anyone plotting his demise, he says he learned of all sorts of other plots and will gladly spend half an hour accusing all manner of Belizean ministers of

being into illegal rackets, from drug-running to selling passports to Hezbollah.

McAfee also attracted the attention of neighbors, who hated his perpetually barking pack of rescue dogs. Nearly six months after the raid by the Gang Suppression Unit, four of his dogs were poisoned and he had to put them down. One of his neighbors, Greg Faull, a 52-year-old American expat from Florida, who'd had angry words with McAfee over the dogs, had filed a complaint shortly before the dogs were poisoned. Not long after, Faull was found dead in his house, shot in the back of the head.

Police interviewed locals and wanted to question

McAfee, whom they named a "person of interest." McAfee denies all wrongdoing. And while some locals have said Faull told them he was going to kill McAfee's dogs, McAfee claims he had no way of knowing that and probably spoke 10 words to Faull in five years. (Besides, he says, Faull loved dogs, and dog-lovers don't kill dogs. How he knew that after speaking only 10 words to Faull is anyone's guess.)

In any case, McAfee thinks the government poisoned his dogs. After all, they'd already raided his house (verifiably true) and tried to shake him down for millions (according to McAfee). And, he figures, they probably whacked Faull, too, confusing in the night the two Americans who lived several hun-

dred yards from each other. McAfee said he wasn't about to go in for questioning, thinking he'd get framed for murder, tortured, or possibly worse.

That's when the chase was on, McAfee evading capture by living rough in the jungle, hiding in safe houses, disguising himself with cornstarch in his hair to look like an elderly beggar, and stowing himself under fish in a fishing boat. Along the way, while maintaining his innocence and even offering to talk to authorities in America, he decided to raise his profile with a delirious and taunting online campaign. He blogged, regularly called reporters, and even invited a *Vice* crew along as he made his escape into Guatemala. But when they posted a picture of themselves online with McAfee, without wiping the geolocation from their iPhone snap, the jig was up. Guatemalan authorities took him into custody, generously providing a computer and letting him blog from jail. Like a common Yelp critic, McAfee rated the Guatemalan jail much more accommodating than Belize's. "The coffee is also excellent," he wrote.

Suspected by authorities in Belize of running a drug operation out of his private antibiotics lab, McAfee saw his jungle compound raided and soon thereafter became a 'person of interest' in the shooting death of his American next-door neighbor. Fearing he'd get framed for murder, tortured, or possibly worse, he fled.

Before authorities there could decide what to do with him, McAfee faked a heart attack, and his lawyers got him sent back to the United States, where he is still considered a model citizen (not counting the DUI/gun-possession-while-under-the-influence charge he racked up last summer in Tennessee). The press, of course, ate all this with a spoon. The prime minister of Belize called McAfee “bonkers.” A star was born.

Back in the early '90s, McAfee hyped the Michelangelo virus hither and yon as one which could destroy all the computers of the world—stoking McAfee AntiVirus sales though Michelangelo wreaked about as much havoc as Y2K (which is to say, not much). He's been singing his cyber-security song ever since—even and especially from the stump—to great effect. As everyone from the DNC to Sony Pictures to starlets storing naked pictures on their iPhones have been hacked, McAfee is poised to clean up.

On the power of his reputation, such as it is, he was recently installed as CEO of MGT Capital, a penny-stock firm that specialized in fantasy sports and saw its stock price skyrocket by 700 percent upon announcing they were renaming the company “John McAfee Global Technologies.” MGT has additionally snatched up security technologies hatched in McAfee's tech incubator, such as D-Vasive, which locks down microphones and cameras so that your smartphone can't spy on you.

Since Belize, McAfee has been hyperparanoid. He's claimed several attempts on his life, most of them unconvincing. (John Pool told me they found a bean-dip can in the yard while patrolling, presumably a sign of Mexican drug cartel assassins.) McAfee conceded to me that they probably don't want to kill him, “just to cut off a few fingers,” to secure the damaging information he collected from his donated-computers caper. Because of this, he won't go out in public at night, and Pool says McAfee even attempted to booby-trap his yard with heavy fishing line and shark hooks strung between the trees, until Pool told him it wasn't legal. One assumes that if powerful shadowy forces wanted McAfee dead or fingerless, they could easily wait until Pool headed to the restroom mirror with his vicegrips to go pull another tooth.

But McAfee's chronic cyberparanoia is contagious. I say this while writing on a laptop with electrician's tape newly applied to my webcam. Even paranoids have enemies. Or, as his *Spike TV* Boswell, Billy Corben, put it: “That's John's life and career—lies that came true.”

Back at the convention, I experienced the full “Losertarian” complement. There was Vermin Supreme, a perennial gadfly who often makes the scene at political events, readily identifiable since he wears a rubber boot on his head. Trying to secure enough delegate-tokens to earn a ballot spot, Vermin posted himself in the lobby with a bag of Sunbeam bread and a custom-made toaster, dispensing toast with imprints of his face to passers-by. There were the two delegates from the “Bearded Caucus” (delegates with beards), who Sherpa'd me around a bylaws meeting, which seemed to go on for several days. (One of them, who is also running for party chairman, would later cause a scandal by doing a striptease from the stage on C-SPAN, right down to his G-string.) For people who purportedly hate restrictive rules, the only thing Libertarians love more than bylaws is to argue about bylaws. It's enough to drive you to drink, which both of the Beardos were doing on the convention floor, downing beers cadged from McAfee's hospitality suite.

And then there was Charles Peralo, an inventor and crypto-currencies trader who looks like actor Jason Schwartzman. He introduced himself to me, saying he had a \$50 bet with someone that he could walk down the steps on his hands. Would I mind holding his ankles? Never one to stifle the entrepreneurial, I assented. As I helped Peralo hand-walk down the stairs, I peeked around the landing to see who he'd wagered with. Nobody was there. “Don't you think the person you made the bet with should witness this?” I ask. “Oh, good point,” he said, as I let him collapse on his face.

“Are you running for anything?” I followed up.

“Yes,” he said, “for chairman of the Libertarian party!”

At a McAfee party to wine and dine delegates, all the stops were pulled out. Organized by his vice-presidential



McAfee with convention regular Vermin Supreme, above; below, Starchild, a delegate/sex-worker-advocate, addresses delegates.



pick, Judd Weiss, a Los Angeles real estate broker who takes artistic pictures at liberty events (“trying to make these nerds look cooler, one nerd at a time”), it featured a trendy electronica DJ, a light show, a stilt-jumper, jugglers, models on stilts with oversized gossamer butterfly-wings, even a guy in a Jesus costume. (Probably an interloper from MegaCon, since Jesus was a little too statist for this crowd, commanding his flock to render unto Caesar that which is Caesar’s.) As I looked around the room of mostly male sad-sacks, I ventured to Billy that the one thing I’m glad I’m not is a single Libertarian. “You mean a Libertarian,” he said.

Even poor Gary Johnson, who is not given to great displays of humiliation seemed to have the Losertarian vibe rubbing off on him. As I followed him to the registration desk, asking how he’ll combat Trump if he crosses the 15 percent polling threshold that allows him to compete in the presidential debates, he said he’d just be the “adult in the room.” But the registration staffers had lost the packet of the once and future nominee of their party, presumably giving it to another delegate named Gary Johnson. Johnson knows the guy and said he’s very nice. “No problem,” he politely reassured them. I said a quiet prayer for Johnson that he peak at 14 percent, since one shudders to think what two ruthless knife-fighters like Trump and Hillary would do to him.

Always game to be entertained, McAfee seemed to enjoy the passing carnival, as well as the glad-handing and the well-wishes from the delegates who, even if they weren’t voting for him, seemed to regard him as a genuine American badass. In a move he probably didn’t appreciate unfolding in front of Billy’s film crew, an elderly woman even reassured him that she “hates what they did to his dogs,” and if someone did that to hers, “I’d kill them.”

Before the official C-SPAN debate on Saturday there was an untelevised warm-up debate on Thursday. McAfee himself chose to warm up in the bar with campaign staffers, who tweeted an invite for delegates to join them. He told me beforehand that “I am doing something unprecedented in quote, politics. It might start tonight. . . . I’m going to tell people why this is f—ed up. I’m going to get run out of this room on a rail.” By the time we reached the debate hall, though, he seemed to be nervous about whatever he had cooking, repeatedly hack-coughing, from uneasiness or Pyramid smoke residue or out of self-disgust that he didn’t think to bring a tequila.

As he kept coughing, I handed him a watery Maker’s Mark—the first and probably last time I’ll ever

feed whiskey to a presidential candidate, pre-debate. He gratefully downed it and, a short time later, took the stage. No major ground was won or lost in the back-and-forth. Gary Johnson and Austin Petersen sat on their leads, though Johnson had to endure a wind-tunnel of boos when calling his running mate, former-Republican Weld, who has run afoul of party dogma on everything from eminent domain to guns, “the original Libertarian.”

As for McAfee, he pulled off a piece of performance art. Something so foreign to conventional politicians, or even unconventional ones like Trump, that you didn’t quite know what to make of it: He told the truth about the office

for which he was running: “I would like to make an announcement,” he intoned. “I am a fraud. One hundred percent. I’ve been playing this game for five months, attending these presidential debates where we are asked by all of you what we will do our first day in office. Well, you know and I know I will not see a first day in office. Please, people, wake up!” McAfee allowed that other candidates might stand a better chance, but “I don’t think that will happen either. . . . I feel like I’ve been on a five-month acid trip, because I don’t believe any of us will become president and if we do, SO WHAT? One man, one woman, against a sea of corruption? What the hell do you expect us to do? Nothing. We will be swept away.”

He thundered on: “Good God, people. Why do we keep asking the same questions? . . . What are presidential debates? They are speeches written by somebody else and pre-anticipated answers coached by dozens of people. What *in the f*— are we learning? Nothing! We don’t watch them to learn about candidates. We watch to be entertained by the *f*—ing spectacle!”

He spoke of the need to forsake the booby prize of the presidency, which Libertarians can’t win anyway, and to concentrate on winning lower offices in statehouses and town councils, the first line in the war for liberty. (Libertarians hold 145 elected offices nationwide, mostly inconsequential ones like on school and sanitation boards.) “We are not supporting the grassroots, the people in the lower offices,” McAfee said, now on a roll. “Do you think we can do anything without first helping you? *You* have a chance. *You* can actually be in the House, *you* can be the mayor. Christawmighty, that’s real. This,” he said, referring to the “presidential” debate, “is a *f*—ing fraud!”

He ended with a rousing closer: “The truth? I want a

Always game to be entertained, McAfee seemed to enjoy the passing carnival, as well as the glad-handing and well-wishes from delegates who, even if they weren’t voting for him, seemed to regard him as a genuine American badass.

beer. And I think most of you would like something similar.” The crowd afterwards seemed to regard him as a cross between Jesse James and Daniel Webster.

I watched him work this vein the rest of the weekend. To a suite full of prospective Libertarian candidates. At his jug-wine-and-crackers-serving hospitality suite. On the outdoor pool-deck, where he beseeched a Johnson-supporting California delegate to open her eyes and quit pretending that the presidency is attainable. “I come to these conventions, I want to dream,” protested the semi-stunned delegate. Fine, he told her, pleasant dreams. But if Libertarians get even 10 percent in this election, he said, will it “buy more freedom for me? Can you buy my privacy? Can you buy smaller government and get the IRS off my back? I wanna win! Let’s freakin’ win! And . . . start changing the grassroots of this party.”

To that end, McAfee had an angle. He and his tech-savvy crew had started votedifferent.us, a vehicle to help liberty candidates with everything from analytics to campaign websites to ballot access. It is hard for me to envision McAfee being a Libertarian party-builder any longer than he was a yoga-cult-leader or an aerotrekker. After all, he didn’t even know what the Libertarian party was roughly a year ago. (He launched his campaign as the charter member of the “Cyber party” until the Libertarians invited him over.) When I mentioned this, McAfee said he’s libertarian in his gut and has been living free his entire life.

During the C-SPAN debate on Saturday, McAfee couldn’t quite execute. Maybe it was the less free-wheeling format. Maybe it was the 30-second opening statements and 60-second closers that didn’t give him “enough canvas” to paint his picture. Maybe his mind was elsewhere as, earlier that day, a process-server had showed up in the convention hall, handing him an amended complaint in a wrongful death civil suit being brought by the family of Greg Faull. (He told me he suspected a dirty trick arranged by Gary Johnson, as Janice cried and hugged him.)

Maybe, too, it was just a tough crowd. While Johnson advocated eliminating the income tax, corporate tax, and the IRS, they booed him for suggesting Congress would never do that without maybe replacing those with a consumption tax. They booed Austin Petersen for saying you should not be able to sell heroin to a 5-year-old. They booed Johnson for saying he’d have signed the 1964 Civil Rights Act, and again for supporting driver’s licenses, since without them, blind people might drive and hurt someone.

The next day, the roll was called, with each state announcing its totals, prefaced with very Libertarian introductions: “Vermont, where the Second Amendment is your gun permit . . .” Without writing anything down, McAfee, with his math background and near-photographic memory, kept the tally in his head. Johnson needed just over 50 percent to clinch. McAfee predicted he wouldn’t get it this round. And sure enough, he missed by a hair on the first ballot, with 49.5 percent. Petersen got 21 percent, and McAfee was third at 14 percent. “Now the fun begins,” he gleefully exclaimed. “Now you get to see what politics is all about. Even though I have no experience in it, all of life is politics.”

McAfee loves to play prestidigitator, the magician who won’t reveal his tricks, making the world seem both more interesting and sinister than it often is. He famously once played Russian roulette in front of a *Wired* reporter, firing a gun at his head 20 times or so, presumably palming the bullets, before firing a live round into the sand. He wanted me to believe that through some shadowy, unspecified means of information-gathering, he knew Johnson had arranged the service in the wrongful-death suit so as to publicly embarrass him (though I seemed to be the only one there who knew it happened). The more prosaic explanation is that the lawsuit was being handled by a firm in

Orlando, and it was widely known, with the Libertarian convention in town, that McAfee would be there for four days.

But if McAfee had a grand scheme to swing the delegates his way, I didn’t see it. He scrambled around the hall, working delegates, putting his head together with Perry and Petersen. Their verdict seemed to be that everyone needed to hold their votes and gain a few more against Johnson. (Duh.) Trying to move things along, I suggested he go to where the Johnson delegates were, to try peeling some off. So we headed for Johnson’s exhibit table in the convention hall. But by then the doughnuts Johnson’s campaign had set out next to the untouched Bill Weld literature were gone, and so were the delegates.

So we did what any fugitive politician-reporter duo would when an election is in God’s hands. We headed to the hotel bar. McAfee wanted a tequila but stuck with a Blue Moon, since he was in strategy mode. We figured it would be a couple of hours before the next round, so all the state chairs could write new introduction speeches (“From the great state of Illinois, where we send our governors to prison . . .”). But as we downed conch fritters and coconut



Dorks in the lobby—but are they Libertarian delegates or costumed MegaCon losers?

shrimp, the second ballot results came in early. Gary Johnson won, with 55.8 percent. The establishment prevailed. There will be no Donald Trump of the Libertarian party. Just a pot-smoking former Republican governor.

"The ride is over, man," I said, deflated. But McAfee was serene, back in Lao-Tzu/The Dude mode: "No, it's not. You mean this present moment right here? That's the only ride there is, dude." He could now go back home, to his dogs and his business and dodging the Mexican drug cartel assassins eating bean dip in his backyard. A tech-incubator partner showed up at the bar. "We can get back to work, Tom!" said McAfee. "I apologize for my diversion. It was an amusement park ride I simply could not pass up." Even more important, now he could forget the beer and order a tequila.

We adjourned to a more private side table, where we got to talking about Belize and Greg Faull's murder. McAfee loves to test the mettle of reporters, question their manhood, accuse them of being manipulative and dishonest, and keep himself amused. I can play that game, too. I'd asked him straightaway numerous times if he had anything to do with the death of Faull, which he repeatedly and categorically denied. So I came at it from a different angle this time. I told him how much I love dogs (true), and how I'd kill somebody who killed a dog faster than I'd kill a dog. "I kind of love dogs, too," McAfee said. I then pushed my luck: "If you killed somebody because of that," I said, "that's a good reason to kill somebody." His eyes widened. "What?

That's not a good reason to kill somebody," he said. "Are you insane? . . . What's wrong with you?" He then turned slightly menacing. "You don't want to set me up, because it will motivate me to set you up, and it will be very unpleasant, and not for me, I promise you."

I let it drop, and we talked about other things: fishing, sailing, life. But McAfee, who had made me feel like his deepest confidant for days, had grown uninterested, half-hearted, checking his phone. I asked what gives. He wasn't happy about my "puppy dog" ploy, he said. I protested that it was just two guys, journalist and subject, slugging it out over drinks, that he shouldn't be angry. "I'm not mad, just offended, big difference," he said. "But now, it does put us on a level where I feel privileged to f— with you at the same level. Do you understand me?" I suggested that's fine, I could handle it, since I have electrical tape over my webcam.

"That's not going to help you," he said. "What about

your text messages?" I pulled an ancient flip-phone out of my pocket and asked how many text messages he thinks I send on that. "I'm not worried about that," he said. "You have something else with you. A real phone." Indeed, I did. I almost never carry a smartphone, but I'd brought a cheap Walmart number on this trip, in case I needed to know something online while stuck at the convention. It was turned off and stashed in my reporting bag, which was stored in the hall. How did he know this?

"I am John F—ing McAfee," he said. "Have you been tracing me?" I asked. "Would I tell you?" he said. "You just did tell me," I shot back. "I did not," he said cryptically.

"You have a real phone with you, that's all I know."

My puppy dog ploy, he reiterated, "That was not a gentlemanly thing . . . that was the end of our relationship. That question. All right, thank you. This is goodbye." And he got up and left.

Two hours later, I got a call from McAfee. He was outside with Janice and Pool and Billy's crew, steel drum music playing in the background, and wanted to know where I was. I thought we broke up. No, he said. "I was just f—ing with you." He said he told his posse, after a few hours had passed, "'Let's unfire this bastard.' . . . You have burning questions in your heart, my friend. And you want answers to them."

So I returned to McAfee HQ with his entourage—a townhouse

in a gated complex about 30 minutes from the hotel, making it easier for Pool to clock potential killers/finger-decapitators. More gaming commenced. More warnings were offered, until McAfee's wife told us it was time to wind things up. Deep into our interview, I didn't pay her much mind, listening to McAfee talk. I'd better heed her, McAfee said, because Janice grew up rough, and has a real temper, and you have no idea "how close you came to having your teeth knocked out by a wine bottle." I apologized.

But McAfee went on. "I am not a violent man," he said, "but I promise you, the people around me, like Amy [a member of his Belize harem who was also a former prostitute], who tried to shoot me in the head, slash my throat, and poison me with rat poison four times—she is. . . . And if you think [Janice] is not violent, then you need to get a clue." I asked why he was attracted to violent people.

"Because they are in need of help," he said. He described

McAfee stuck with a Blue Moon, since he was in strategy mode. We figured it would be a couple of hours. But as we downed conch fritters and coconut shrimp, the ballot results came in early. Gary Johnson won, with 55.8 percent. The establishment prevailed. There will be no Donald Trump of the Libertarian party. Just a pot-smoking former Republican governor.

the graphic physical abuse his wife went through before he met her. “I am trying to right some f—ing wrongs. And I see horrors. . . . And the horrors bring violence with them. . . . And so you say, ‘you’re hunting out violence?’ . . . Look at the world as it is. The people in the press—you make me sick. You do. You want a story, but that story can only be told through the narrow confines of your perceptions of this world. . . . Who are you? How shallow can you possibly be?”

McAfee put his hands to his face and started sobbing. Now, he was not gaming me. By the time I got back to my hotel, an email from McAfee was awaiting: “I apologize for coming unglued this evening. It was impolite and unwarranted.”

Though I’m not going to lie, I was sort of moved by his answer and took some of it to heart. Even if it was a long way around the barn for a simple question about why he dates/marries women who might possibly maim or kill him. But as I considered the rest of his admonition, about looking at the world as it is, I thought back to his spooky talk about my phone. How did he know about the spare phone, anyway? Immediately afterwards, I had gone to retrieve my bag in the convention hall, where it had been sitting all day by the Tennessee delegation. But it was no longer there. It had been moved to the McAfee campaign’s table. I couldn’t help but notice that a compartment I never leave unzipped was unzipped. The very same compartment that was holding my smartphone.

Before the convention banquet, I bumped into the reelected Libertarian party chairman, Nicholas Sarkow, in his black-tie evening-wear. Unlike many of the people trying to take his job, he is eloquent and urbane, an ideal spokesman for the party’s freedom principles. Still, I couldn’t help but ask why the Libertarian party seems to publicly undermine itself—booing heroin restrictions for 5-year-olds, doing C-SPAN stripteases. He looked at me, thoughtfully, and said the party is the only political home he has ever known. “We have people who think different, who act different, and that’s part of the attraction of the Libertarian party. So these things happen.” But, he pointed out, when a guy strips down to his G-string on the stage, he doesn’t get elected, he gets ejected from the hall. “However, the old parties have somebody who gets onstage who is a buffoon, who makes a

joke of himself and of the party, and they nominate him.”

He was speaking, of course, of Donald Trump. The reputedly crazy Libertarians did eject their crazies, including the Donald Trump of the Libertarian party, John McAfee. But then I got to thinking of something McAfee told me in the car one night, when he was being his reflective,

charming self (which he often is), an amalgam of the sacred and profane, instead of playing the menacing, emotionally unbalanced psychopath. We were sitting in the backseat. Janice was riding shotgun, yakking on the phone. John Pool was driving, perhaps fantasizing about Belizean hitmen he would foil or the next tooth he would pull.

I asked McAfee why he lunged from adventure to adventure, never staying very long, just seeming to go native for a short spell, wherever he lands. He went native in the Belizean jungle, he admitted, and he went native in the Libertarian party, too. It’s kind of like Ecclesiastes, he said: “There’s a time for every purpose under heaven.” People want to “grab something that is beautiful, and hold it, and own it.” But they can’t. People love spring flowers, but later comes the autumn, when the flowers are dead. And then you have “the brilliance of these leaves blazoned by the sun, turning them brilliant golds and reds . . . the dappled hills painted by the brush of God. And drop that, because that will fall, too.”

He admitted he’s done a little of everything in his life, what some might consider too much. “I reach a point, get bored. . . . I’ve seen everything possible. You couldn’t do anything stranger than the flying I’ve done. Canyon running. Flying to the top of a 12,000-foot mountain, finding the deepest canyon, and diving down into it.” He assured me he is “as shallow as a 6-year-old child.” But that’s not necessarily a bad thing. “How else could you live? Otherwise, I cannot help but take myself seriously. Life is over then. If we can’t laugh at ourselves, good God! Have you ever really seen children

at play? Through their eyes, their actions, their smiles and incredible joy? . . . We’ve lost that. What do you think Jesus meant if He really said the words, ‘Suffer the little children to come unto me . . . for of such is the kingdom of heaven?’ And if heaven is right here, right now, and you’ve lost that ability, if you want heaven back, then play as a child in this mysterious, magic f—ing world.”

The Libertarians cut their craziest candidate, all right. But maybe they also just cut the sanest candidate of all. ♦





Student demonstration in Athens (2015)

The Morning After

Why Greece's financial crisis gives Europe the jitters. BY JOHN PSAROPOULOS

George Papaconstantinou has been through hell. His reputation as the finance minister who cowrote and signed Greece's first bailout agreement with the eurozone in the spring of 2010 cost him his cabinet post the following year and his parliament seat the year after that. He spent the next three years fighting charges that he tampered with state documents to help relatives evade taxes, which could have jailed him for life.

During all this time, Greece went through four changes of government, each bringing more pain and auster-

Game Over
The Inside Story of the Greek Crisis
 by George Papaconstantinou
 CreateSpace, 328 pp., \$19.95

ity than the last, while its recession spiraled into a full-blown depression. Both socialists and conservatives found it convenient to make a sacrificial lamb of Papaconstantinou as the bringer of austerity. Under indictment, it became impossible for him to appear in public because he was openly vilified; unable to do so much as take out the trash, he lived effectively under house arrest.

Last year, however, the supreme court acquitted him, and *Game Over* is Papaconstantinou's moral comeback: an attempt to pare away the paranoia

and suspicion that have hounded him and recast the record of his time in office—from October 2009, when the socialists swept to power, until June 2011, when he was ousted—on the basis of fact. “For five years, I believed reality was so compelling that it would shape attitudes,” he says. “Instead, common sense and pragmatism gave way to conspiracy theories and hatred. ... I was amazed by the power of populism in shaping people’s minds.”

That populism filled the body politic throughout the crisis like seawater pouring through portholes, sinking government after government. Papaconstantinou describes accurately how this lack of bipartisanship not only raised the political mortality rate but also scuttled Greece's negotiating position at critical

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LOUISA GOULIAMAKI / AFP / GETTY

moments. “The power of experience is immense,” he says, explaining why Greek voters constantly fell for false promises. “What you do not experience has no comparable weight.”

Papaconstantinou correctly blames the factional, egomaniacal, and populist character of Greek politics for Greece’s failure to face a national crisis with a national front; but he omits to mention that his own party behaved in exactly this way when in opposition, killing crucial education reforms in 2005-06. He also fails to mention that it was the socialists who instituted deficit spending on a massive scale in the 1980s, setting a standard for the profligacy of future governments that led to today’s 328 billion euro debt.

As a member of the Eurogroup—the informal council of eurozone finance ministers—Papaconstantinou also provides an insider’s account of the painstaking process through which the eurozone gradually realized that it had to provide a distress fund for Greece, later enlarged to cover other governments priced out of the money markets.

The idea that wealthier eurozone members never came around to, however, was that some sort of debt reprofiling would be necessary to give underwater eurozone economies time to rebuild growth. This is because Angela Merkel and other fiscal hardliners, such as Finland and the Netherlands, accepted the distress fund only on condition that their taxpayers would recoup their money. Rescheduling the debt of Greece would amount to a transfer. The eurozone instead forced heavy losses on private holders of Greek bonds in 2012, which made markets even more skittish.

Game Over does more than portray a eurozone led by markets, its policies slithering on the belly of necessity. It tracks how the sovereign debt crisis elevated Germany to the status of indispensable monetary power with the ability to veto ideas (such as debt rescheduling) it doesn’t like. The International Monetary Fund now asserts that Greek debt is not sustainable and suggests extending Greek repayment schedules to the end of this century. The German government has single-handedly postponed any such discus-

sion until after it has faced parliamentary elections in late 2017.

By the time Greece signed its third bailout agreement last summer, it had already defaulted on the IMF with no visible repercussions from markets to other eurozone economies. The systemic risk of letting Greece default is now, provably, zero. The German finance minister Wolfgang Schäuble had first suggested, in September 2011, that Greece take a leave of absence from the euro. By denying Greece a debt reprofiling, he now appears to have set the trap for Greece to abscond. Sacrificing the Greeks helps keep other eurozone economies in line. Since Ireland, Portugal, Spain, and Cyprus have returned to markets, the Greeks can be blamed for their own fate.

Could Greece have spared the eurozone all this trouble—and preserved its sovereignty in the process? And could it have renegotiated its sovereign bonds without calling the eurozone’s credibility into question? *Game Over* is too much a defense of what Papaconstantinou *did* do—cut the deficit by more than a third and begin the process of liberalization—to address the broader issue. He could have slashed spending while counterbalancing the recessionary effect of austerity, but only by overhauling markets and cutting back the state on a revolutionary scale, something that ran against the consensual instincts of Prime Minister George Papandreou.

Modernizing Greece incrementally has been painful. In 2008, at the height of its borrow-and-spend profligacy, Greece took 57 billion euros in tax revenue from an economy worth 242 billion euros. Seven years after Wall Street’s financial meltdown, the economy had shrunk by 27 percent to 176 billion euros, but tax revenues were only marginally lower at 51 billion euros. The Greeks are paying more or less the same taxes on much lower income. That transition is on the European statistical record: In 2008, tax revenues represented 32 percent of the economy compared with an EU average of 39 percent. Last year, they were 39 percent, compared with the EU average of 40 percent. A pension reform

passed in May will raise the tax burden further. Looked at from an individual standpoint, too, Greeks are now as highly taxed as anyone in Europe: The average single worker pays 39.3 percent of income to taxes and social security in the latest OECD figures to be released.

This was done by constantly shifting the tax focus. As unemployment rose and revenue from personal income tax slipped—from 11.6 billion euros in 2008 to 7.8 billion euros last year—governments raised the sales tax and consumption taxes to make up the difference. But consumption and sales, too, fell after 2011, so new taxes were introduced—principally on labor and property.

Greeks survived all this partly by tightening their belts, partly by spending their savings (bank deposits have fallen by 60 percent during the crisis), and partly by working and trading in an extensive black economy. It is this last, difficult-to-quantify aspect of Greek survival that has encouraged hardliners among Greece’s creditors to keep pushing for higher taxes, evidently believing that taxes that look unreasonable on paper work in practice because they draw on unregulated income. Thus, under the government’s latest pension reform, workers are called upon to pay 24.5 percent of their income towards social security, 7 percent towards the national health system, as well as a 22-45 percent income tax.

The effect of these taxes is to push Greeks further from regulation and destroy any culture of payment. By assuming dishonesty, it is cultivating it. Those who don’t go underground go abroad. A recent survey by Endeavor Greece, a nonprofit promoting high-value startups, found that 4 in 10 businesses are thinking of relocating abroad for tax reasons, up from a quarter last November. Capital drain was preceded by brain drain. Greece’s statistical agency has found that Greek society has suffered a net loss of 270,000 people since 2008. In short, the declared economy is disintegrating, and as a result, so is society. Live births have been falling since 2006; three years ago they slipped below the death rate and are still falling.

Greece does need more austerity, but

that now needs to be focused solely on shrinking the bloated state and using the proceeds to provide a survivable environment to businesses that want to stay honest. Before the crisis, one in four employed people worked for the public payroll. Today, that is still the unacceptably high ratio. The ruling Syriza party will not rectify this because it is a defender of big government. Honest and hard-working Greeks are thus forced to bear the weight of Syriza's promise to protect unnecessary civil servants and of Angela Merkel's promise to collect her loan sooner rather than

later. It is only a matter of time before they collapse under the weight.

The bold proposals Greece needs to resurrect itself cannot be discussed with creditors who fundamentally distrust the Greeks—and each other. So no one is currently in a position to empower the Greeks to pull themselves up by the bootstraps. This is clearly not what either George Papaconstantinou or the eurozone had in mind when they instituted the first bailout; but the politics of necessity, which Papaconstantinou amply describes here, have become the politics of overlordship. ♦



Mystery Play

A new approach to some very old riddles.

BY JOSEPH BOTTUM

Back in 1975, Richard Wilbur—probably the greatest translator of poetry into English that America has ever known—published a pair of rhyming riddles he had translated from the Latin of a seventh-century Anglo-Saxon monk named St. Aldhelm. Practitioners of formal poetry are always lured by Latin, and especially by the neatness, economy, and precision of its smaller forms. English is a messy, sprawling language; it has to be forced into the Romance literary shapes that have defined poetry since the Renaissance. But Latin—ah, there's a language that wants to be concise and clever. A language that wants to do epigrams, aphorisms, and riddles. It's like a test of skill or a masterwork: English poets who can translate the tight little forms of Latin have proved their virtuosity.

Despite Wilbur's uncovering of Aldhelm for formal poets, with the implied challenge to translate the rest of the saint's 101 riddles, no one followed

up with a complete Englishing of the Latin squibs—until now. The poet A.M. Juster has now released this brilliantly rhymed, metrical translation of the complete set, including the longer acrostic poem that opens Aldhelm's work.

Educated first by Irish monks and then by the North African officials sent to Canterbury by the pope, Aldhelm became abbot of the monastery of Malmesbury in 675 and bishop of Sherborne in 705. The latinized foreign words in his writing suggest that the Irish monks had taught him at least some Greek and Hebrew. This was at a time when those languages were fading in Western Europe under the pressure of the barbaric invasions destroying the Roman Empire, and Aldhelm was acknowledged by the Venerable Bede as a premier Latin scholar and writer of the era. Along the way, Aldhelm built

new churches—including St. Laurence's at Bradford-on-Avon, one of only a handful of unaltered Anglo-Saxon churches still surviving—expanded his monastery's holdings, and exchanged letters with many of the nobles, theologians, and intellectuals of the time.

It's in one of those letters—to Aldfrith, king of Northumbria—that Aldhelm laid out his theories of poetry in the declining education of the Dark Ages. And by way of illustration, he included his own examples of Latin hexameters: 101 riddles, typically from four to eight lines long. They are odd works, in many ways. Aldhelm assumes a fairly dense knowledge of patristical theology, late classical physics, and the myths of popular medieval piety. *Sic cruor exsuperat quem ferrea massa pavescit*, he writes, for example. Juster renders this ninth riddle:

*Look! I'm not scared by iron's long,
hard stress,
Nor in flame's heat do I incinerate,
But goat's blood softens my fierce
stubbornness,
So gore defeats what scares an iron
weight.*

And the answer is adamant: a diamond—a perfectly easy riddle to guess, provided one knows that popular medieval legend held that the only way to destroy a diamond was to dissolve it in goat's blood. Others are less difficult. The wonderful 32nd riddle, for instance, begins *I got my start from honey-laden bees / And yet my outside part has grown from trees*—drawing a picture of the riddle's answer (a wax writing tablet) through a series of pastoral images.

The author of translations of Petrarch and Horace, along with a pair of books of his own poetry, A.M. Juster is well known by readers of formalist poetry for his meticulous meters and careful forms, winning the Nemerov Prize for the year's best sonnet three times. Less well known is that "A.M. Juster" is a pseudonym, an anagram formed from the poet's real name, Michael J. Astrue—a man who has had to hold down other jobs while writing

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his poetry and translations. Among them are a set of very senior government positions. He worked in the White House counsel's office, acted as general counsel for the Department of Health and Human Services, and chaired the Social Security Administration from 2007 to 2013.

While he was leading the Social Security Administration, he was outed as a poet in 2010 in an article by the poet and biographer Paul Mariani. As Astrue tells the story of bureaucratic Washington's response, everyone seemed nervous to be around him for the next several weeks: They knew, he says, how to deal with an official caught with his hand in the till or with his arm around a prostitute; but his being exposed as a poet left them uncertain whether to sidle up to him or avoid him as toxic.

After he finished his term at Social Security, Astrue did a little work in the private sector and wrote on financial and political topics under his given name (including for *THE WEEKLY STANDARD*); the rest of the time, he continued in the poetry mode as A.M. Juster, doing the work that has now issued in this new translation. (Full disclosure: I saw the book in manuscript and am thanked in the preface.)

Saint Aldhelm's Riddles will provide plenty for scholars to argue about. The book is reasonably well designed, with a beautiful cover and 70 pages of commentary following the Latin and English text on facing pages. General readers will find the poetry fun, although each riddle should have had its answer printed (upside down?) beneath it. Instead, the book annoyingly gathers the answers in a list buried among the back pages.

The poetic English translation reduces to a single acrostic the double acrostic of the Latin in Aldhelm's long opening theological poem, the saint's name spelled out in both the first and last letters of each line. In his introduction, Juster bemoans his inability to render the translation with the full puzzle of the Latin, but if that counts as a failure, it's one of few in this charming, clever, concise volume. ♦

BCA

The Bully Moose

Our 25th president as hunter-gatherer.

BY CHRISTOPH IRMSCHER



Theodore Roosevelt on the Amazon

In the fall of 1870, Theodore Roosevelt Sr. sat his 12-year-old son down for a conversation that would have condemned a lesser person to a lifetime of depression and despair. He had the right mind for success, his father told him, but not the body to support it: "You must *make* your body," he said. "It is hard drudgery. . . . But I know you will do it." Theodore Jr. went on to "do it." He pumped iron at Wood's gymnasium on the Upper East Side, canoed in the Adirondacks, chased down bison in the West, thus developing his famous barrel chest—supplemented, over the course of time, by a stomach to match. The latter would eventually earn him, among his African carriers, the nickname "Bwana Tumbo," unflatteringly trans-

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The Naturalist

Theodore Roosevelt, a Lifetime of Exploration, and the Triumph of American Natural History

by Darrin Lunde
Crown, 352 pp., \$28

lated as "Mr. Unusually Large Belly."

Growing up, Theodore Jr.—"Teedee" to his parents, he hated being called "Teddy"—had physical problems galore: constant headaches, stomach aches, coughs, fevers, nervous diarrhea, and asthma. Without his glasses he was helpless. No one seemed less equipped to become a Rough Rider than Teedee. Sickness prevailed, as well, in the world around him: His father would die of stomach cancer, and his mother died of typhoid fever on the same day as his wife, whose kidneys failed soon after childbirth.

"I am an Oyster Bay type of guy," a much later president, George H. W.

Bush, proudly told a visitor, referring to the Roosevelt home on Long Island. The elder Bush had no idea: He was a born athlete while Roosevelt's mental and physical robustness—never an assured thing—came from relentless effort. No American president had worked so hard at becoming what he was not. Daniel Aaron once wrote about the “artifact” Roosevelt and the ways in which TR had reinvented himself, taking the public along for the ride. Now, Darrin Lunde's fascinating study, more than any other book about Theodore Roosevelt that I have read, reminds us of the crucial role that animals, big and small and mostly dead or soon to be dead, played in that constant process of reinvention.

The Naturalist is not really a book about Roosevelt the hunter, the topic of so many gushing tributes, and Lunde is not particularly interested either in Roosevelt's admirable legacy of conservation, although he touches on both subjects. Apparently, Roosevelt, myopic from birth, wasn't even a very good shot (the hunting buddy of his later years, son Kermit, seems to have been even worse). From the beginning, there was something a little theatrical about Roosevelt's exploits, even when he didn't yet have a national audience. Eager to be taken seriously as a cowboy, he felt the need for a proper cowboy suit, which involved tracking down the one old lady who still knew how to make such a thing.

The paraphernalia he needed for his expeditions—the hobnailed boots, the leather knee-patch pants, the waterproof mackinaw, the helmet—were of the utmost importance to him, and in Lunde's account, we find out more about the library he carried with him into the field (books were trimmed down to make them just the right size for Roosevelt's pocket, and were bound in durable pigskin) than about the animals he dispatched. But as he found out, no amount of role-play could keep tragedy at bay: “I will bring you home the head of a great buffalo bull,” he promised his pregnant wife, leaving

her for six weeks to shoot animals that he already knew were disappearing from the American landscape.

Roosevelt remained self-conscious about his wilderness skills his entire life. The notebooks he kept in Africa, published recently in Michael R. Canfield's comprehensive *Theodore Roosevelt in the Field*, contain multiple sketches of animals he killed, their bodies perforated by bullet holes, a bizarre account of his triumphs and failures as a marksman. When an admirer asked Henry David



Theodore Roosevelt in Africa

Thoreau what he should carry with him on a hike he had been planning, Thoreau's recommendation was unambiguous: “I would advise not to take a revolver or other weapon of defense. It will affect the innocence of your enterprise.” Roosevelt's ventures into the field—admittedly, a much more dangerous environment than Thoreau ever set foot in—were not innocent or defensive ones: He went there not to be surprised and transformed but to rediscover what he already knew, to “bag” what he could lay his hands on.

Lunde describes for us what happened when Roosevelt, nearly blind without his glasses, looked his first elephant in the eye: “Having carefully studied a sectioned elephant skull in the American Museum before his trip, he visualized his shot.” As the elephant turned, Roosevelt fired.

He missed. No amount of museum experience can prepare you for the movements—quick, intense, lethal—of the living, breathing, terrified animal. Consider the mess Roosevelt made on Lake Naivasha in Kenya, where he had gone to shoot one hippopotamus and ended up needlessly killing four because the animals had panicked—as had he: “We shall have to let the papers know,” he sighed to the journalist who had been following him around.

Roosevelt seems alien to us today, Lunde says, in one of the more introspective moments of his narrative. Indeed, it requires a certain suspension of disbelief to accept, without hesitation, his argument that, since the white rhinoceros was about to become extinct, what one needed to do was to shoot at least one more so that it could be placed in a museum for all to see. But as Lunde argues, this is precisely the logic we need to understand if we want to understand Roosevelt: He was a naturalist, a specimen collector, before he was a hunter, writer, president, and soldier. And no one is better equipped than Lunde, a practicing naturalist at the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History, to tell that part of the story.

Roosevelt's obsession with natural history began when he saw a dead harbor seal on display in a grocery store on Broadway and took the animal's head home to clean and inspect it. *The Naturalist* brims with accounts of how to skin an animal, from the birds Roosevelt hunted in Oyster Bay to the elephants he bagged in Africa. Whatever the animal, Roosevelt was mentally dismembering it from the moment they first met. His real tool was not the gun but the knife. When he was only 14, during a family tour of Europe and Egypt, he would regularly clog up the hotel room sinks with the innards of the birds he had acquired during the day. His own guts might have been in disarray, but when it came to animals, he was the emperor of entrails. Decades later, in Kenya, Roosevelt could be seen hovering next

to the heaps of corpses he had made—lion, elephant, giraffe, hippopotamus, rhinoceros, antelope—wading in the spilled contents of their stomachs. Surrounded by the carcasses of his animals, Roosevelt knew that he had conquered his own wheezing, coughing, oozing body. As Lunde reminds us, preserving an elephant was not a job for the faint of heart: An elephant's skin had to be cut off in up to five sections, depending on its size. It would take Edmund Heller, Roosevelt's zoologist during his Africa trip, several days to "process" properly such a large animal: removing the guts, "roughing out" the muscles from the skeleton bones, scraping the skin and then salting it, which would leave one's hands raw and sore for a long time. All this so that the animal, now deader than a doornail, would (at a much later point) be reassembled and resurrected in taxidermic splendor, with a new, perfectly sculpted, body inside its old, mended skin, gracing the hall of a great museum of natural history.

In September 1901, the assassin's bullet that killed William McKinley put Theodore Roosevelt in the White House. Two years after his return from Africa, another assassin's bullet nearly terminated Roosevelt's life. He was in Milwaukee at the time—again campaigning for the presidency, this time as the candidate of his new Progressive party—when John Schrank, a deranged barkeeper from New York, walked up to his automobile and shot him, from five feet away, with a .38 caliber pistol. It was only when Roosevelt slipped his hand inside his heavy coat and it came back covered with blood that he realized he was hurt.

"It takes more than that to kill a bull moose," he shrugged, referring to his party's nickname, insisting that he deliver his 90-minute speech as planned. If the magnificent elephants of Africa came crashing to the ground when he shot them, Theodore Roosevelt, the expert artificer of his own body, had taken a bullet and was still standing: a superior specimen, the best in his collection. Ironically, what had helped saved his life was a reminder of his infirmity, the steel-reinforced eyeglass case he carried in his pocket. ♦



Eleventh's Hour

The making of the thinking man's Encyclopædia.

BY DANNY HEITMAN

In *This Old Man*, his recent collection of autobiographical and critical writings, Roger Angell fondly recalls how his boyhood was shaped by the fabled Eleventh Edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*.

It was published in 1911, the same year my old man graduated from college, and I think he must have picked up ours early on; by the time I got into it—and into "Aboukir" and "Armor" and "Muscular System" (great drawings), "Reptiles" and "Zanzibar," along with "Ship"—each slender, blue leather-bound volume would leave a crumbly dust of learning in my lap when I got up to put it away.

Others have claimed the Eleventh as an early literary influence. Jorge Luis Borges wrote of the *Britannica's* place of honor in his father's library. After winning a modest literary award in 1929, the young Borges used part of his winnings to buy a secondhand set of the Eleventh for himself. As a 14-year-old, Kenneth Clark took the Eleventh to bed with him during a convalescence and was hooked. Within its pages, he wrote, a reader "leaps from one subject to another, fascinated as much from the play of mind and the idiosyncrasies of the authors as by the facts and dates."

Angell, now in his nineties, perhaps belongs to the last living generation of readers to have such an intimate connection with the Eleventh. For the rest of us, the excellence of the Eleventh, like the sublimity of the *Mona Lisa* or the genius of Shakespeare, tends to be not so much argued as simply assumed.

But why was the Eleventh so spe-

Danny Heitman is the author of A Summer of Birds: John James Audubon at Oakley House.

Everything Explained That Is Explainable

On the Creation of the Encyclopædia Britannica's Celebrated Eleventh Edition, 1910-1911

By Denis Boyles
Knopf, 464 pp., \$30

cial? That's the question Denis Boyles tackles in this cultural history of the *Britannica's* iconic edition.

During the Eleventh's heyday, perhaps it was simplest to agree that the Eleventh was great because Horace Everett Hooper said so. As the edition's driving force, he was a tireless promoter, a difficult man to refuse. After someone expressed surprise at the Eleventh's healthy sales—doubting that so many people would want the new encyclopedia—Hooper offered a correction: They didn't necessarily *want* to buy the *Britannica*, he conceded, "I made 'em."

Born into a distinguished Massachusetts family in 1859, Hooper was expected to get a university education and become a lawyer, perhaps even entering government service like his father, who had moved the family to Washington when he got a job in the Lincoln administration. But while working in a bookstore, young Horace fell in love with the trade, ditching the classroom and heading west to find his own way. As Boyles explains, the frontier proved a promising market for booksellers: "Social aspirations required even the poorest settlers to seek cultural equality by owning one of the badges of literacy—a bound set of Dickens or Shakespeare, Mark Twain's latest book, or an imposing shelf of encyclopedias, atlases, and dictionaries."

the main supporting aeroplanes as a means of maintaining the structure in proper balance. Their machines to begin with were merely gliders, the operator lying upon them in a horizontal position, but in 1903 a petrol motor was added, and a flight lasting 59 seconds was performed. In 1905 they made forty-five flights, in the longest of which they remained in the air for half

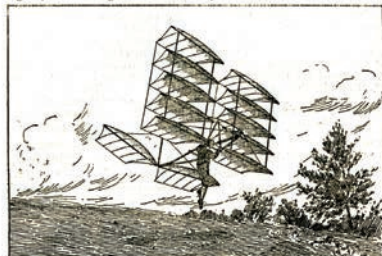


FIG. 50.—Chanute's Multiple Gliding Machine.

an hour and covered a distance of 24½ m. The utmost secrecy, however, was maintained concerning their experiments, and in consequence their achievements were regarded at the time with doubt and suspicion, and it was hardly realized that their success would reach the point later achieved.

Thanks, however, to the efforts of automobile engineers, great improvements were now being effected in the petrol engine, and, although the certainty and trustworthiness of its action still left something to be desired, it provided the designers of flying machines with what they had long been looking for—a motor

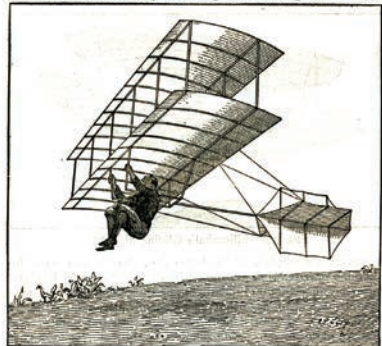


FIG. 51.—Chanute's Biplane Gliding Machine.

very powerful in proportion to its weight. Largely in consequence of this progress, and partly no doubt owing to the stimulus given by the activity of builders of dirigible balloons, the construction of motor-driven aeroplanes began to attract a number of workers, especially in France. In 1906 A. Santos Dumont, after a number of successful experiments with dirigible cigar-shaped gas balloons, completed an aeroplane flying machine

(b) a pair of very light propellers driven at a high speed; and (c) an exceedingly light and powerful petrol engine. The driver occupied a position in the centre of the arrangement, which is shown in fig. 52. The machine was furnished with two wheels and vertical supports which depended from the anterior parts of the aeroplanes and supported it when it touched the ground

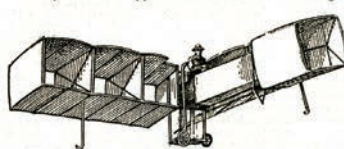


FIG. 52.—Santos Dumont's Flying Machine.

on either side. With this apparatus he traversed on the 12th of November 1906 a distance of 220 metres in 21 seconds.

About a year later Henry Farman made several short flights on a machine of the biplane type, consisting of two main supporting surfaces one above the other, with a box-shaped vertical rudder behind and two small balancing aeroplanes in front. The engine was an eight-cylinder Antoinette petrol motor, developing 40 horse-power at 1100 revolutions a minute, and driving directly a single metal screw propeller. On the 27th of October 1906 he flew a distance of nearly half a mile at Issy-les-Moulineaux, and on the 13th of January 1908 he made a circular flight of one kilometre, thereby winning the Deutsch-Archdeacon prize of £2000. In March he remained in the air for 3½ minutes, covering a distance of 1½ m.; but in the following month a rival, Leon Delagrè, using a machine of the same type and constructed by the same makers, Messrs Voisin, surpassed this performance by flying nearly 2½ m. in 6½ minutes. In July Farman remained in the air for over 20 minutes; on the 6th of September Delagrè increased the time to nearly 30 minutes, and on the 20th of the same month Farman again came in front with a flight lasting 42 minutes and extending over nearly 24½ m.

But the best results were obtained by the Wright brothers—Orville Wright in America and Wilbur Wright in France. On the 9th of September 1908 the former, at Fort Myer, Virginia, made three notable flights; in the first he remained in the air 57½ minutes and in the second 1 hour 3 minutes, while in the third he took with him a passenger and covered nearly 4 m. in 6 minutes. Three days later he made a flight of 45 m. in 1 hour 14½ minutes, but on the 17th he had an accident, explained as being due to one of his propellers coming into contact with a stay, by which his machine was wrecked, he himself seriously injured, and Lieutenant Selfridge, who was with him, killed. Four days afterwards Wilbur Wright at Le Mans in France beat all previous records with a flight lasting 1 hour 31 minutes 25½ seconds, in which he covered about 56 m.; and subsequently, on the 11th of October, he made a flight of 1 hour 9 minutes accompanied by a passenger. On the 31st of December he succeeded in remaining in the air for 2 hours 20 minutes 23 seconds.

Wilbur Wright's machine (fig. 53), that used by his brother being essentially the same, consisted of two slightly arched supporting surfaces, each 12½ metres long, arranged parallel one above the other at a distance of 1½ metres apart. As they were each about 2 metres wide their total area was about 30 sq. metres. About 3 metres in front of them was arranged a pair of smaller horizontal aeroplanes, shaped like a long narrow ellipse, which formed the rudder that effected changes of elevation, the driver being able by means of a lever to incline them up or down according as he desired to ascend or descend. The rudder for lateral steering was placed about 2½ metres behind the main surfaces and was formed of two vertical pivoted aeroplanes. The lever by which they were turned was connected with the

as a journalist for the Hearst newspapers, once courted new readers for the *Britannica's* Ninth by suggesting that it was ideal “for men—and women—who have already enjoyed the fullest opportunities of education, who desire to refresh and clarify the impressions already received.”

That's also a pretty good take on the Eleventh, which was less interested in challenging popular assumptions than in affirming them. Boyles describes the self-assurance that suffused the Eleventh under its editor, the Englishman Hugh Chisholm. In Chisholm's hands, the Eleventh loomed as large as a pyramid, a striking monument to the accomplishments of the British Empire:

Modern life seemed finally to conform to a rational structure, one nourished by commerce, enlightened by charity and good works, governed by order, and devoted to Progress. A Union Jack, representing the global supremacy of the English language, flew confidently from the apex of that pyramid . . . Now the entire world—all of existence, really—could be explained, if only one knew where to look.

Chisholm, an Oxford-educated writer and editor for England's leading publications, practiced a style of journalism that (as Boyles puts it) encouraged writers “to not only report events but to inject into their reportage commentary wrapped in literary style.” He applied the same approach to the Eleventh, recruiting, in addition to the usual specialized experts, lots of fellow journalists to write entries. The result displayed clarity and vigorous expression to a degree not typically seen in reference works, lending the Eleventh its mainstream appeal.

The range of entries seemed to reach as far as the empire itself, colonizing virtually every subject. The Eleventh served up erudition on boas, bugs, and backscratchers, cockroaches and condors, the evil eye and the history of toast. “It was formerly the custom to have pieces of toast floating in many kinds of liquor, especially when drunk hot,” we learn. “It is said to be from this custom that the word is used of the calling upon a company to drink

Book salesmen of the period often dramatized their products, offering recitations from selected works to drum up business. Hooper never seemed to lose the sense of literature as a kind of theater, an attitude that played to his strengths. He was a natural performer with a gift for recasting old wine in new wineskins. When sales of the venerable *Century Dictionary* faded, he joined with Henry Haxton, an equally aggressive pitchman, to revive the brand: “An ideal Christmas present!” their ad exhorted. “Buy now! A great boon!” Hooper and Haxton had a Trumpian sense of hyperbole, swinging exclamation points like billy clubs to beat customers into compliance.

Hooper steamed across the Atlantic

in 1896 and in no time was brainstorming a similar revival for the *Britannica*, which had fallen on hard times. He recruited the *Times* as a business partner, using its resources to help relaunch the encyclopedia's Ninth Edition, then a Tenth. Sales climbed, although Englishmen accustomed to quietly discreet notices for books harumphed at Hooper's Barnumesque bravado: “You have made a damnable hubbub, sir, and an assault upon my privacy with your American tactics,” a retired member of Parliament scolded him in a letter.

Hooper bought out the *Britannica's* Edinburgh owners, positioning himself for the ambitious Eleventh. Haxton, who had honed his gift for grandiosity

the health of some person, institution or cause.” Boyles quotes heavily from the Eleventh in his narrative, but to get the true flavor of the landmark edition, it’s best to read the entries whole. (For those who aren’t lucky enough to have a vintage set, however, there’s always 1994’s *All There Is To Know*, a clever one-volume selection edited by Alexander Coleman and Charles Simmons. It’s worth a look just to read Coleman’s capsule history of the Eleventh in the prologue.)

Like Coleman, Boyles suggests that the chief charm of the Eleventh—its perfect encapsulation of the English mind and manners at the dawn of the 20th century—is also at times its darkest complication. The entry titled “Negro,” for example, is a catalogue of stereotypes, arguing that blacks are inferior because of their poor brain structure, which inclines them as they approach adulthood “to a sort of lethargy, briskness yielding to indolence.” It’s one of numerous passages in the Eleventh when a reader goes looking for omniscience but instead bumps into the familiar, fallible voice of a fellow human being—a spectated scribe dressing up nonsense as fact. As Kenneth Clark said of the Eleventh, it “must be the last encyclopaedia in the tradition of Diderot which assumes that information can be made memorable only when it is slightly colored by prejudice.”

Memorable writing ultimately requires memorable writers, a truth that wasn’t lost on the founding fathers of the Eleventh. Among the high-profile contributors were T.H. Huxley, Algernon Swinburne, and Bertrand Russell. Edmund Gosse wrote the entry on “Style,” an essay on the ideals of literary expression that serves as a shining example of the virtues it seeks to impart. Style, he told readers, “appeals exclusively to those who read with attention and for the pleasure of reading. It is not even perceived by those who read primarily for information.” Which is why the Eleventh endures more than a century later, in our cyber age of information glut. Facts come cheaply, but real style is a rare commodity. ♦

BCA

Lavender Blues

A new opera explores an old Washington drama.

BY JAMES KIRCHICK

Cincinnati. Name names.” So asks one young man to another, both sitting on a park bench in Washington’s Dupont Circle. One of them has just attended the wedding of a high-profile senator, and his newfound friend, like any good Washington social climber, pries him for the guest list.

It’s the sort of conversation that could transpire between any two people in our nation’s capital, at any point in time. But the year is 1953, and the senator in question is no ordinary solon but Joseph McCarthy, then at the height of his anti-Communist purge. In this context, asking someone to “name names” is rife with innuendo.

And not just of the politically inquisitorial variety. Such double entendres will inevitably pepper the conversations of our two characters because they’re gay men. To be a homosexual in 1950s America required vigilant discretion and a preternatural capacity for deception. Perhaps nowhere was the talent for dissimulation more necessary than in Washington, where a “Lavender scare” surrounding gays in the federal bureaucracy racked up substantially more victims than the notorious (and far better recorded) Red one.

Cold War Washington is the setting for *Fellow Travelers*, a riveting new opera that premiered in June at Cincinnati’s Aronoff Center for the Arts. It is based upon the 2007 novel of the same name by Thomas Mallon, whose distinct forte is the great American political-historical novel, one that seamlessly interweaves real people and

occurrences with characters and plot developments entirely of his own fertile imagination. (His latest novel, *Finale*, a saga of the Reagan years, renders major events like the 1986 Reykjavik summit and the Iran-contra scandal through the experiences of a motley set of personalities including Richard Nixon, Christopher Hitchens, Merv Griffin, and a fictional National Security Council staffer whose entwinement with them all drives the plot.)

Fellow Travelers excavates a largely forgotten era of the American past by way of a romance between two young men. Timothy “Timmy” Laughlin is a fresh-out-of-Fordham English major and would-be priest working as a cub reporter for the old *Evening Star*, the sort of eager-beaver type who has been descending upon the city every summer for decades. Hawkins “Hawk” Fuller is the older, more experienced, and manipulative State Department official who seduces him. From their chance encounter on a Dupont Circle bench develops a passionate and necessarily furtive relationship that is, given the time and place, doomed to fail.

Those unfamiliar with opera, assuming it to be an art form exclusively suited to telling the stories of Renaissance princesses played by busty divas belting out Italian arias, may be apprehensive about a show like *Fellow Travelers*, whose characters engage in witty repartee about prosaic matters such as the spelling of Roy Cohn’s surname. Even the prospect of an English-language opera may seem heretical, so associated is the genre with the classical European tradition. But *Fellow Travelers* is hardly the first opera to tackle modern political issues in a vernacular Americans can understand; composers have previously dramatized subjects diverse as Richard

James Kirchick, a correspondent for the Daily Beast, is writing a history of gay Washington, D.C.



Joseph Lattanzi (left), Aaron Blake in the Cincinnati Opera's production of 'Fellow Travelers'

Nixon's presidential visit to China and the 1985 *Achille Lauro* terrorist hijacking. With its tragic circumstances, malicious villains, tortured lovers, and ill-fated romance, *Fellow Travelers* lends itself naturally to operatic adaptation, though that should not minimize the achievement of composer Gregory Spears and librettist Greg Pierce in masterfully executing Mallon's novel for the stage.

From the moment of his first kiss, Timmy is as naïve about love as he is head-over-heels in it, his anticomunism as uncomplicated as his infatuation with Hawk. "I believe the fast growing tentacles of Communist ideology are the most significant threat to our great democracy," he declares in a job interview with a right-wing senator. "McCarthy's doing the most important work a man can do: rooting out Reds who chew up our values from the inside out," he says defensively, when Hawk criticizes the senator. Hawk, meanwhile, does not share a desire for the monogamy Timmy craves and fears

the consequences that any relationship beyond the carnal could elicit.

What crucially distinguishes Timmy and Hawk's relationship from any other affair between a young innocent and an older cynic is the external danger which surrounds them. This was a time when prominent leaders were gripped by a paranoia that viewed Communist sympathies and "perversion" as two sides of the same subversive coin. Despite these obsessions—or, perhaps, because of them—architects of the Red and Lavender scares betrayed similarly rudimentary understandings of their quarry. For instance, when Hawk is interrogated by a special unit established to root out homosexuals in the State Department, he's asked to repeat the word "district" (presumably to catch a lisp) and walk across the room (to discern if his hips move in swishy fashion). He passes with flying colors. Throughout the performance, the audience comes to appreciate the suffocating, pervasive sense of being watched that gay men and women of the time must have felt.

During scene changes, the other actors surround Timmy and Hawk, glaring silently as props and walls and furniture move around them.

The story's fateful conclusion is foreshadowed early, when one of Hawk's sympathetic officemates whispers to him that a colleague has been fired for being found in "the wrong bar." That line has a tragic resonance in the wake of this summer's Pulse nightclub shooting, to whose victims *Fellow Travelers* has since been dedicated. They, too, found themselves, by dint of their identity, or the identity of a friend or relative, in the wrong bar—and paid the ultimate price. Like Romeo and Juliet's, Hawk and Timmy's romance is condemned by circumstance: Where a pair of warring families made the coupling of Shakespeare's young lovers impossible, societal homophobia here spurs a heartbreaking act of betrayal. *Fellow Travelers* portrays how prejudice not only inflicts horrible consequences upon people, but makes us do horrible things to one another. ♦

PHILIP GROSHONG

Injury Plus Insult

Sorry for the inconvenience. \$50, please.

BY JOE QUEENAN

Last year I had an annoying medical issue that cost me several thousand dollars to explore. I say “explore” because the problem never got solved, at least not by the two physicians I originally consulted. Nonetheless, I had to pay for the relief that I sought, but never got. The biggest expense was for the CAT scan, which proved to be not particularly helpful.

People routinely complain that if your mechanic doesn’t fix your car, or if the middle C is still flat after the piano tuner’s visit, you shouldn’t have to pay. But medicine isn’t like car repair, because there are many more things that can go wrong with the human body. Especially if it is an upscale foreign import. As a consumer and a patient, you simply have to accept that, in the world of medicine, sometimes the magic works and sometimes it doesn’t. But either way, you have to pay the shaman for his services.

So when my bills from the doctors and the radiology center came, I paid them, even though the consultations were a waste of time, the prescribed medications were useless, and the diagnoses were incorrect. Then I went out and found someone who could actually fix the problem.

About six months after my last procedure, I got a bill for around \$50 from the guy who stood by the CAT scan machine while it was checking my ears for structural effects or audiophonic anomalies. The CAT scan was administered last August; the ancillary bill for supervising the procedure arrived in January. I don’t know why I didn’t get this bill right away, but I didn’t. Appar-

ently there was some sort of computer glitch back at Radiology Central and the bill got sent out months late. The woman from the radiology unit was very apologetic. I understood. These things happen. Not to worry.

To be scrupulously fair, fifty bucks is not going to break the bank. It’s a piddling number. It’s not the end of the



world. And the guy watching the imaging machine while it took pictures of the insides of my head certainly did his job in a highly professional fashion and definitely deserves his money. Yet, somehow, the whole thing rankled. Since I had the CAT scan in August of the previous year, and the bill didn’t arrive until January, it meant that part of the bill for the procedure was arriving more than five months after the event.

It is a cornerstone of our legal system that the condemned are entitled to a speedy trial and, hopefully, speedy sentencing. When dealing with physicians, I almost always think of myself as “condemned.” This is particularly

true in the case of proctologists. As such, I want “swift and immediate justice,” a concept all Americans revere. Put another way, I want to get put out of my misery ASAP.

That’s where the five-month-old bill for fifty bucks really gets up my nose. When I have an unsatisfactory experience—medical, musical, culinary, romantic—I like to get the corpse in the ground by sunset. I don’t want to be reminded that I consulted the wrong doctor, submitted to the wrong procedure, dated the wrong girl, ate the wrong *tabouli*—and find out about it long after the embarrassing incident or nightmarish assignation or horrible meal.

When you get a bill long after a personal or medical or even automotive debacle, you feel as if you’re being taunted from beyond the grave. It’s like a girlfriend calling you six months after you broke up to say, “I forgot to mention that I hate your record collection, your mom wears hideous clothes, and all your friends are jerks.” It’s like getting a bill from a restaurant where you had a crummy meal months and months earlier, accompanied by the message: “Sorry, that’ll be another buck and a half; we forgot to charge for the rancid coleslaw.” It’s like getting an email in January from someone who fired you last August: “And another thing: Those red suspenders look pathetic on a man your age!”

A bill that is not sent to you in timely fashion is like a V-2 that explodes 15 years after the war is over. It’s like the other shoe dropping years after the first one hit the ground. It’s like belting a grand slam and being told months later that, upon careful review of the tape, the ball landed foul and you are not getting credited for the four runs batted in.

What makes all this so annoying is that it forces you to exhume the cadaver of a person you didn’t even like, just when you’d started to put the moldy old stiff out of your mind for good. It’s like a delayed-reaction medication that gives you heartburn six months after you had your gall bladder removed. It’s like a punch you thought you’d ducked in August that lands on your chin the following January.

It’s like . . . well, you get the idea. ♦

Joe Queenan is the author, most recently, of *One for the Books*.

VINTAGE IMAGES / GETTY

**"Donald Trump said Tuesday that he will commit to three debates this fall with Democratic rival Hillary Clinton, but may try to re-negotiate the terms that have been agreed upon by a bipartisan commission."
—Time, August 9, 2016**

PARODY



Chairman Frank J. Fahrenkopf Jr.
Chairman Michael D. McCurry
Commission on Presidential Debates
1200 New Hampshire Avenue NW, #445
Washington, DC 20036

Dear Frank and Mike,

First of all, did you receive my fruit baskets? I know you must be wondering: Since when is caviar a fruit? But try it on some apple slices—believe me, it's terrific. Just be careful not to eat the Golden Delicious apples because they are, in fact, made of gold. Please enjoy!

Now about those pesky debates. Why three? Haven't you heard the line about martinis being like women's breasts? One is too few, three is too many? Oops, now I got you thinking about breasts. You're welcome, fellas.

I'd like to suggest a few minor tweaks to the schedule:

(1) It would be my honor to host all three debates at the Trump International Hotel Las Vegas. Of course, your rooms would be comped—among other things. The chef will cook for you special, the dancers will kick your tongue out, and your credit is good. I'll draw chips for everyone in the room so they can play on the house.

(2) Domestic versus foreign versus town hall or whatever—this is way too broad. Instead, how about the first debate focuses on real estate, the second on cybersecurity, and the third on Libyan cities that begin with a "B"? Believe me, the audience will love it.

(3) And finally, I hope you won't mind my camera crew wandering on and off the stage during the debates. I'm just collecting footage for a reality series I'll be hosting when all this is over. (Let's face it, this thing is rigged.)

See you in Vegas,

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Donald Trump'.

Donald J. Trump